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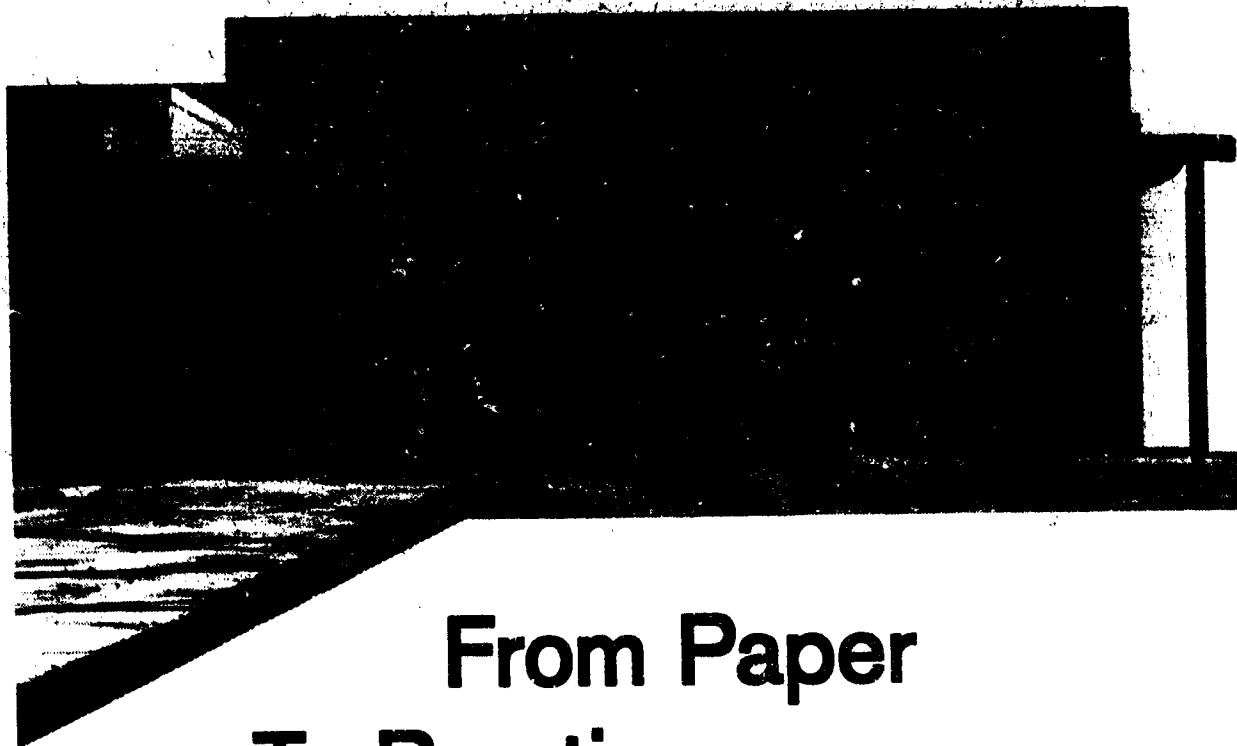
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ABSTRACT

Signed into law on September 2, 1992, California's charter-school law has led to the approval of over 100 charter schools. San Diego City Schools (SDCS) was one of the first districts to sponsor charter schools, including the Harriet Tubman School, 1 year after the law became effective. This report provides a brief overview and summary of a case study-report of the charter school at Harriet Tubman Village operating since September, 1994. Data were derived from document analysis; a review of literature; parent questionnaires (81 out of 180 parents, a 45 percent response rate); classroom observations; and interviews with school district staff, school administrators, school board members, teachers, and parents. The background and context section recounts a brief history of the Tubman school from its inception. Findings are presented for four areas of interest--educational program, teacher characteristics and beliefs, governance and other issues, and parent perspectives. The following conclusions are made: (1) The lines of authority and liability between charter schools and the district are ambiguous; (2) the review and approval process did not produce a charter that is clearly consistent with the legislation or the school district's requirements; (3) the charter-school petition inadequately describes the school's educational program; (4) teachers express some of the concepts and teach some of the content that the petition describes; (5) standardized tests are driving significant adaptations in the educational programs; (6) the Tubman Governance Council has been partially inhibited because its authority is not clearly delineated; (7) governance council members had to grapple with serious and complex issues, often without an experienced leader; and (8) the principles of choice may be compromised if parents are not fully knowledgeable about the nature of Tubman's program and their other options. Recommendations are offered for autonomy and accountability issues, the education program, improved governance, ensuring informed parental choice, and future evaluation. Six tables and eight figures are included. Appendices contain the text of California charter school law, the San Diego Charter School Study: Guiding Framework, the methodological framework and notes, and parent responses. (Contains 16 references.) (LMI)



From Paper To Practice

Challenges Facing a California Charter School

May 16, 1996

Technical Report

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From Paper to Practice: Challenges Facing a California Charter School

A report presented to the San Diego Unified School Board

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May 1996

Technical Report

WestEd

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INTRODUCTION

At first glance, the Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village seems like any other neighborhood school. A few sparse jacaranda trees edge a lawn, well-worn in places by children's play. Located in a district building that once housed an elementary school and later administrative offices, the main facility appears unusually well-kept and clean. A small vegetable garden grows next to a newly paved playground and a striking mural made of glazed tiles, designed by children, extends on a wall near the auditorium.

Tubman's K-6 classrooms mirror the multiethnic community surrounding the school. Of the 227 children, approximately 24 percent are Caucasian, 34 percent African American, 35 percent Hispanic (most of whom come from Spanish-speaking families) and seven percent of Asian descent.

Yet Tubman is not an ordinary public school; it is one of eight charter schools in San Diego City Schools (SDCS). And even among charter schools, Tubman is unusual. While most charter schools are conversions of existing public schools, Tubman started from scratch. All of its teachers either were new hires or newly selected from other schools in the district. Even a school facility had to be found. When the district reopened the John Muir School site to relieve overcrowding at two other schools in the area, Tubman found a home. Now the school shares the site with a conventional public school, as the district believes children bused to Tubman should have a choice of which school to attend.

Finally, and perhaps most distinguishing, Tubman is different in its educational program. One of a small but growing number of public schools based on the private Waldorf school model,¹ it derives its teaching and learning strategies from the theories of Rudolph Steiner, founder of an eclectic, allegedly religious philosophy called Anthroposophy.²

All of these distinctive features make the Tubman story a fascinating and complex one. Not surprisingly, they also raise complicated policy issues. In order to gain insights into these issues, SDCS asked WestEd to collaborate on a study of the Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village. The WestEd study team, in collaboration with district staff and with the cooperation of the school, was guided by an eight-member advisory committee representing the local county office of education, universities, schools, business and civic organizations, and a parent from a charter school in another district. Data collection at the Tubman site commenced in November 1995 and concluded in May 1996.

Overview of Charter Schools

To understand the Tubman school, it is important first to re-examine the principles upon which charters are based. Charter schools are essentially deregulated,

site-based managed schools of choice.³ In California, charter schools receive automatic exemptions from most state codes and district policies regarding curriculum, instruction, budget, and personnel. Such freedom is meant to provide those closest to the learner with the flexibility to implement innovative programs. In return, charter schools are required to show results by participating in state-mandated testing programs and by demonstrating attainment of the goals specified in their charters. If a charter school fails to show results, its charter can be revoked.

Charter schools are created through a formal written agreement between a person or group and a local school board. A charter school may be initiated by any person or group provided that ten percent of the entire district's teachers or 50 percent of any one school's teachers sign the petition. Charter schools receive state funding based on student enrollment, although the actual amount allocated to each charter school may vary due to negotiations with, and administrative costs charged by, local school districts.

Students are expected to attend charter schools by choice. Therefore, the extent to which a charter school is successful is contingent upon how well it attracts students. Advocates believe that charter schools have the potential to transform the entire system; as charter schools become more successful, they will increasingly force other public schools to adopt equally effective models or face shutting down.

A Reform on the Fast Track

As a charter school, Tubman is a member of one of the fastest growing, popular national reforms of the past decade. Four years ago, only two states had approved charter school legislation: Minnesota (1991) and California (1992). Today, 22 states have adopted charter school legislation and at least 11 other states are considering it.

California, now in its third year of implementation, has contributed nearly 40 percent of the nation's 270 charter schools. Signed into law on September 2, 1992, California's charter school law has led to the approval of over 100 charter schools, including eight charter schools in San Diego.⁴ SDCS was one of the first districts to sponsor charter schools, approving three charter schools, including the Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village, one year after the law became effective.⁵

Leading the vanguard in both number and relative seniority, California's charter schools and their experiences are being watched closely by those both inside and outside the charter school movement.⁶ For both advocates and skeptics, the stakes are high. For teachers and others on the frontlines, toiling to make their charter schools viable learning communities, the stakes are even higher.

The research of WestEd and others recognizes the enormous dedication and hard work demonstrated by many parents, teachers and community members in pursuing and

implementing their vision of how teaching and learning should occur through their charter school. In some cases, evidence already exists that this risk-taking — and mistake-making — has yielded intriguing and innovative approaches to education.⁷

Charter schools have not stood alone in facing the uncertainty and challenge involved in this new venture. Local school boards, superintendents and other sponsoring agencies are also pioneers, and they are now having to abandon traditional modes of governing while at the same time dealing with the element of risk. Sponsoring agencies, such as SDCS, must now rethink conventional responses in handling unfamiliar and often unforeseen issues in order to preserve the freedom granted to these schools.

Charter schools are part of a movement that aims to topple the status quo in order to promote systemwide transformation as well as achieve new educational heights from which others can learn. As such, they are destined to provoke some amount of controversy and conflict. The Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village is no exception.

This controversy and conflict, however, is not simply a consequence of being part of a highly visible and somewhat provocative reform movement. Through the course of this case study, several crucial and interrelated concerns emerged as critical not only to Tubman but also to all charter schools attempting to move from paper to practice. These concerns are organized into the following five areas and are discussed in further detail throughout the report:

1. **Autonomy and Accountability;**
2. **Educational Program;**
3. **Site-based governance;**
4. **Parental choice; and**
5. **Charter School Evaluation Design.**

As this study will reveal, there are no easy answers to these questions. Yet how the district and others involved with this movement address these issues may have long-term implications for the future of Tubman and other charter schools.

Organization of Report

The information in this report is organized into the following four sections: The Methodology section describes the scope and limitations of the study and the methods used to gather and analyze our data. We have also included a Background and Context section that recounts a brief history of the Tubman school from its inception. In the central section of our report, Findings, we relate our findings in four areas: 1) Educational

Program; 2) Teacher Characteristics and Beliefs; 3) Governance and Other Issues, including those related to the school's governance council and to safety and legal issues; and 4) Parent Perspectives. Based on this set of findings, we provide Conclusions and Recommendations, with recommendations directed toward both the school and the district. Appendices are included for further details and clarification of primary source documents and data collection.

METHODOLOGY

Unlike other research on charter schools to date, this study provides a rich body of in-depth information — both qualitative and quantitative from a variety of sources — about the evolution and progress of one charter school. The information provides valuable insights about the complexities involved in the creation and governance of a new school.

The WestEd research team, like the school and the district, encountered new and somewhat unexplored territories. Because of the newness of the charter school concept and the fundamentally different paradigm of school reform it represents, both the district and WestEd believed it was important to take the time to continually reassess our approach and methods. Key challenges that we faced in designing this study included:

- 1) Determining the predictable objectives and purposes for this study given
a) the multiple accountability needs of the district, and b) our expertise and mission as an organization;
- 2) Examining what expectations or criteria this school should be held accountable given the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the way all three source documents — legislation, district guidelines and charter petition — are written; and
- 3) Exploring whether the Tubman school should be compared to other schools in the district. If so, whether it would be to a higher standard than the other schools in the district.

Below are the approaches our team took in resolving some of these issues around charter schools and evaluations of charter schools.

Purpose of This Study

The basic bargain upon which a charter school is founded is autonomy in return for accountability. Yet how the accountability part of this bargain actually becomes operationalized is not clear. Many charter schools — and their sponsoring agencies — around the country are struggling to reach a determination about how this is done. A recent national analysis of charter schools noted:

We have yet to see a single state with a thoughtful and well-informed plan for evaluating its charter school program. . . . At the “micro” level, moreover, decisions about renewing or terminating individual charters, allowing the schools to grow, letting them open branches or reproduce

themselves, etc., all should flow from evidence, not just reputation, connections, or evocative rhetoric.⁸

San Diego Unified School District (SDCS) approached WestEd with several evaluative components, or "evidence," that the district staff felt were needed to meet its accountability requirements, not only of the Tubman school but also of the other charter schools in the district. The district's needs included: financial audits; studies to monitor compliance with laws; formative and summative evaluations of programs and processes; and program review and improvement studies. Because each of these accountability processes would have taken shape as a very different type of study, it was necessary to determine realistic goals and purposes based on 1) *WestEd's mission* as an organization, 2) *the needs of the district*, 3) *the context of the school*, and 4) *the availability of time and resources*. The study consequently is intended to:

- provide baseline program improvement and accountability information on the school's program as outlined in the three primary source documents: the charter law, charter petition and district guidelines; and
- serve as a pilot test of a program improvement and accountability process from which a process and set of instruments for studying other charter schools in the district could be developed.

When the district first requested the study in June, 1995, it wanted a study to resolve the controversy of whether or not Tubman was teaching religion, as certain individuals claimed. While WestEd did not attempt to determine whether the school is teaching religion or violating other legal requirements, we did report information on these topics.

Finally, it was agreed that WestEd would not make a conclusion or recommendation to the school board about the future of this school, although we did make recommendations about specific aspects of the school program.

Selected Focus Areas

As a starting point for our research design, the WestEd team and the district staff analyzed the three primary source documents: provisions of the *charter legislation*, the *district's guidelines* (given to each group of petitioners before they came before the board) and the school's *charter petition*, i.e., the charter document approved by the school board. Through a series of conversations with the district about whether the questions should be more compliance-, program improvement- or summative-oriented, we came up with a pool of 15 general ("core") evaluation questions and 35 specific questions covering an extensive range of complex topics. These questions, and our summary findings, are described in more detail in Appendix B.

The final revised framework included the following 15 core questions:

1. Is there evidence of progress toward achieving the student outcomes identified in the charter?
2. Does the racial and ethnic balance among student backgrounds reflect the general population within the district?
3. How is the school being governed?
4. How closely does the school's educational program reflect district criteria?
5. How is the school being staffed?
6. Is the school targeting low-achieving students?
7. Has the charter school provided expanded choices in educational opportunities available within the public school system?
8. Is the school following school district procedures?
9. Has the charter school met other conditions upon which the charter petition was approved?
10. Is the educational program consistent with the objectives stated in the charter?
11. Is the school offering the educational program promised in the petition?
12. Are teacher qualifications consistent with the charter petition?
13. Is the school following general procedures described in the petition?
14. Is the school following administrative procedures described in the petition?
15. What process was used to approve the charter petition and what was the role of the district's criteria?

District staff collaborated with the WestEd study team in identifying this initial pool of questions. However, WestEd took responsibility for deciding the research priorities and appropriateness or feasibility of each question. WestEd distilled and supplemented this initial pool of questions. We made these decisions within the context of an evolving project and growing familiarity with Tubman's situation.

Some questions were not addressed as in-depth as others, while others were added during the course of the study. A major purpose of this study was to test the usefulness of the original framework of questions and search for others that may have been overlooked. The study team identified several additional questions; for example, how parents were recruited into the school, their knowledge about it and their satisfaction.

Other questions were barely touched upon or left unaddressed for a variety of reasons. For example, while we collected general information on whether the school is offering the educational program promised in the petition, we did not believe we could responsibly make a determination about the implementation of a Waldorf educational program, largely because of the newness of the school and because of the difficulties in evaluating a program that was vaguely defined to begin with and that is now in the progress of modification, as described in more detail below.

Some questions were not fully answered because they seemed more appropriate for a summative evaluation and proved inapplicable to such a new school, such as whether the stated outcomes are improving for all students. Still others could not be responsibly answered within the limited time and resources available, e.g., procedures used to handle student discipline, suspensions and expulsions.

Other research questions were outside the agreed upon scope of this study. We did not address, for example, questions such as whether the school was complying with district contract procedures, fiscal accounting procedures and other conditions under which the charter was approved because compliance auditing on such technical matters falls outside our role as an organization.

Determining Accountability Criteria

This study faced challenging questions about which standards and criteria should be applied to this school. Our intent was to determine how closely the program being implemented by the school matched the requirements, guidelines, and promises in the three primary source documents. However, ambiguities in each of these documents, which are described in more detail below, prevented us from coming to a clear consensus about the specific criteria that could be conclusively used to determine whether the school had met either the letter or the spirit of the law.

California Charter School Legislation

California's charter school law (see Appendix A) does not clearly define a school district's responsibility and authority to hold charter schools accountable for district requirements. On the one hand, it stipulates that charter schools are not subject to the laws generally governing school districts and, furthermore, that they will operate independently from the existing school district structure. On the other hand, as sponsoring agencies, districts have the power to revoke the charters of schools that fail to pursue or meet pupil outcomes stated in their charters, that violate the law or conditions set forth in the legislation or that fail to use generally accepted fiscal accounting standards.

Given that the law is silent in some areas and seemingly contradictory in others, districts are approaching their responsibilities for monitoring and supporting charter schools in radically different ways. Some districts — San Diego included — have used their authority as the approval agency to apply their own set of requirements as conditions for approval. The district's legal office takes the position that charter schools cannot operate independently and should be held accountable to at least some of the district policies. For example, charter schools in San Diego must administer districtwide tests, and some district officials maintain they should be required to use the district's food service. However, the legal counsel for the city's Chamber of Commerce has advised

charter schools that they can operate as legal independent entities. The Chamber also maintains that school districts do not have the right to impose additional conditions for approval provided a school meets the 13 conditions mentioned in the legislation. It maintains, further, that districts should not be in an oversight position.

In addition to the list of 13 legislative requirements that all charter schools must address,⁹ the state legislation includes provisions that are essentially narrative descriptions of the legislative intent.¹⁰ It is not clear whether the priorities expressed in these sections of the act were intended to be another set of criteria to which schools should be held accountable, or whether they only represent the aspirations of the legislation's author. For example, the general provisions stipulate that one intent of the law is to increase learning opportunities for all pupils, "with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low achieving." Are all charters expected to strive for this goal? It may well be that, until individual cases are tried in court, charter schools and their sponsoring districts will not have clear answers.

Tubman's Charter School Petition

While the Tubman school's petition stipulates an annual evaluation of the school by Waldorf and district educators, it does not specify the standards and criteria that will be used to judge the school's performance. Some language in the charter petition is relatively vague. For example, it refers to the objective of creating an "island of tranquillity" but does not describe how such a goal can be concretely measured.

While there is no provision for using standardized tests for students, the petition does clearly identify the methods teachers will use to assess student progress, such as: portfolios, main lesson books, pieces of art, practice papers, and other written and oral work. However, the standards used to assess student portfolios, art and other work are not described in the petition.

In addition, the petition varies in degree of specificity in identifying those subject matter areas that students will cover at certain grade levels (see excerpts below),¹¹ and overall is less specific about the level of performance or mastery expected and how that will be measured.

Moreover, the petition was described by the director as a "living document" that must necessarily change as the school seeks to accommodate Waldorf principles to the conditions of public education in general and to the requirements of the district. Practices appear to have changed so considerably during this adaptation process that they no longer reflect the curricular and program elements described in the petition. In addition, many of those working at the school reported that they were not fully familiar with the contents of the petition.

Excerpts of Tubman Charter Petition

First Grade Arithmetic—Recite 2, 3, 5, and 10 tables in order by rote.

Recognize odd and even numbers up to 24. . .

Second Grade Grammar—The correct grammatical environment is provided by example. No critical feedback is provided until fourth grade.

Third Grade Writing—Student writing can be read by an adult.

Fourth Grade Man and Animal—Demonstrate knowledge of various animal characteristics and the uniqueness of man through painting, drawing, sculpture, descriptive paragraphs, stories or oral comparison.

Fifth Grade Botany—Divide the higher plants into monocots and dicots.

Fifth Grade Ancient History—Study the cultures and geography of India, Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Sixth Grade English—Recognize the parts of speech and write complex sentences.

School District's Guidelines

Even the school district's guidelines for approving charter schools represent a mixture of explicit requirements and general questions that the petitioner must address. (These are currently under revision by the district.) More important, only a selected few of the district's guidelines are addressed in the Tubman charter petition, and more of them are not mentioned at all. Therefore, the study team could not determine which provisions the school understood and to which it agreed to adhere. In any case, it was not clear whether the guidelines should be regarded as a contractual agreement the school was expected to fulfill or as a strategic planning document stipulating general intentions.

Given these ambiguities in the primary documents, pinpointing common criteria by which to judge the school's progress was difficult. However, where common themes and points of intersection emerged, the documents were used as sources to guide our evaluation questions, along with lessons learned about formative evaluations of schools and other organizations. For example, the instruments reflect questions about some of the requirements mentioned in the legislation and echoed, to some extent, in the district guidelines and charter petition, such as the educational program, governance structure, students' achievement levels and academic progress, health and safety procedures, criminal background checks, racial and ethnic composition and evidence of discrimination, attendance alternatives and tuition charges. Many of the questions about the school's educational program were based on the curriculum plans described in the

charter petition. Some questions were also adapted from requirements and questions in the district's guidelines.

Our research team also had to determine what was reasonable to expect of a fledgling school so early in its history. Tubman is among 40 percent of charter schools in California that did not exist prior to the legislation, i.e., it was not a public school that converted to charter status.¹² WestEd's prior research¹³ on charter schools in California demonstrates that new schools face more arduous challenges than converted schools, which is a critical consideration when assessing their progress.

Comparing Tubman to Other Schools

A thorough evaluation of charter schools should ultimately include comparative information about a representative sample of other schools in the district with comparable student characteristics and similar objectives. WestEd researchers, the district and an Advisory Group member believe that comparative data from other schools is extremely valuable information in studying a school so new in its development. This approach has the obvious advantage of determining whether students in an alternative public school such as Tubman are progressing as fast or faster than those within the conventional system. Unfortunately, given the district's more urgent need for immediate information about the Tubman school, and limited resources and time, this approach had to be abandoned for the time being. Including comparison schools also would require more time and resources. Moreover, it would be difficult to find other schools that fairly match the distinctive features of this particular school.

A compromise, however, would be to conduct a comparative review of other charters in the district that are at the same stage of development. Our observations suggest that blanket comparisons should not be made blindly, without regard for the uniqueness of charter schools. Rather, future studies should be based on the collection of common indicators of progress and outcome data that are agreed to by both the district and charter schools. A time frame for when they should be accomplished, including milestone objectives, should also be considered. The district already has a starting point for collecting standard measures: districtwide tests and a districtwide parent satisfaction survey in which all schools, including charters, participate.

However, even with such measures in place, the question remains whether charter schools should be expected to accomplish more than other schools in the district. Some advocates of charter schools would call this practice an unfair double standard. Some critics, on the other hand, maintain that the special status given to charter schools can only be justified if they *demonstrate* improved learning outcomes — in other words, they are expected to accomplish more than other schools.

Instead of including comparison charter schools in this study (as that was beyond the time and resource limits of this study), we have used the process of this study as a basis for suggesting designs for future studies. Now that the necessary baseline information has been collected, we recommend that future studies of charter schools in the district use some of the instruments and processes designed for this study, in order to provide valuable comparative information.

Other Conditions Surrounding the Study

Most studies encounter conditions that impose some limits on them, and this study confronted several such conditions. They are enumerated here to provide a full description of the situation prevailing in the district at the time of the study. They include:

- data collection at only one point in time and without appropriate benchmark information. (However, WestEd is prepared to continue working with this school to modify the process so that they can continue to collect data over time for program improvement purposes.)
- the usual resource constraints and restraints on time related to conflicting schedules and the district's need for information before the end of the school year.
- the real or imagined threat throughout the district that the school might be shut down and that this study might contribute to that decision. Given this threat, it is possible to assume that many of the individuals who were interviewed and who responded to the survey may have been less candid to protect the school.
- an on-going conflict between the director of the school and the governance council, which eventually resulted in the dismissal of the director during the study. This tension may have contributed to a significant degree of reluctance on the part of study participants to respond to questions with full candor.
- a teacher strike during the study, which may have had minimal direct impact (since the charter school teachers are not members of the bargaining unit) but whose indirect impact on parent questionnaire returns is unknown.

Key Themes That Emerged

Through the course of our study, especially after our interviews with background informants, some key themes emerged from our research. As stated earlier, some of these issues surfaced early on during our background interviews with key informants, prompting us to probe more deeply for information and adding new dimensions to our

original evaluation framework. We discuss the following themes in full in the Conclusions and Recommendations section:

Autonomy and Accountability — How does the school as well as the district balance a charter school's freedom with an adequate amount of public accountability for what students are learning? How should the charter approval process be structured to ensure that schools operate soundly and legally but are given the latitude to innovate?

Educational Program — How should the charter's curriculum be judged? By statewide curriculum framework standards? Or by the criteria as written in the charter petition?

Site-based Governance — How does a school create an effective, problem-solving, and representative school-based governance council?

Parental Choice — How can a school ensure that parents have genuine opportunities and the knowledge to choose among schools?

Charter School Evaluation Design — To what criteria should charter schools be held accountable? Should the standards be higher than those for other schools? When is it appropriate to conduct an in-depth, comprehensive evaluation of the school?

Methods

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to obtain and analyze information gathered from a variety of sources. In the interest of validity, the WestEd study team has not relied exclusively on any one data source but, to the extent feasible, has looked for points of convergence among different sources of information. Within space limits, throughout the report we identify the sources of assertions made and we note the degree of agreement or disagreement among different sources. Also, we include alternative perspectives where appropriate.

Sources of Information

Information for our study was assembled from a variety of sources, including those listed below. (See Appendix B for a more in-depth discussion of the research methodology used in this study.)

- A compilation of the requirements and expectations of the school based on:
1) state legislation governing charter schools; 2) the charter petition; and
3) the school district's guidelines for approving charter schools.
- An analysis of documents available in the school and in the district pertaining to the Tubman school, including curriculum and teacher materials, selected training materials and minutes of the Governance Council meetings.
- Twenty informal interviews with six school district staff and a variety of individuals familiar with the inception of the school, including two of its founders, five parents with children enrolled during the first year, and five former teachers, a representative from the business community and the legal counsel for the California Teachers Association.
- Two interviews with the director of the school and his administrative assistant.
- Five interviews with members of the San Diego Unified School Board.
- Nine interviews (lasting up to 1-1/2 hours in length) with the eight main teachers responsible for kindergarten and grades 1 through 6, as well as one teacher responsible for supervising the early childhood education program and for teaching crafts.
- Eight informal and unstructured observations of each teacher's class (to provide study team members with concrete examples of the teaching approaches described in the interviews).
- Seventeen interviews with parents, thirteen randomly selected and another four parents selected because they serve on the governance council.
- Eighty-one questionnaires mailed to 180 parents (45 percent response rate).
- WestEd's previous studies and surveys of charter schools in California, and published briefs on policy issues.
- Literature and other information relating to the charter school movement and other choice programs in education, including information about charter schools on the Internet.

Legal, time and resource constraints precluded collecting data from students through interviews. We did, however, ask parents as part of our interviews to tell us about their children's perspectives and what they liked about the school.

Teacher Interviews

An interview protocol was developed to guide the interviews with the teachers. A modified version of this same protocol was used to interview the school's director and his assistant. Each interviewer was free to explore unanticipated topics as they might arise.

Classroom Observations

One full class period of each teacher who was interviewed was observed by a member of the study team. The purpose of these interviews was to provide study team members with concrete examples of concepts and teaching approaches described in the interviews. Also, they helped highlight certain features of the program that otherwise might have been overlooked and that the study team would need to probe in greater depth. Classroom observations were not used to evaluate the quality of classroom teaching or curriculum materials.

Parent Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Tubman parents in order to permit parents to describe their experiences with the school and to voice their own opinions and attitudes in a semi-structured situation. Seventeen Tubman parents participated in this phase of the study; 13 were selected at random and four others were selected because they were seated on the governance council.

The Parent Survey

In addition to the interviews with parents, a questionnaire was developed in collaboration with the district staff and mailed to the households of the 180 parents of the students enrolled in the Tubman Village Charter School. The survey focused on how much they know about the school, their level of participation in it and how satisfied they were with the school and with their child's academic progress. To get a sense of the students' experiences with the school, they were also asked about their child's progress in school and the various learning experiences that their child may be experiencing at Tubman school. Some of these questions were taken from the district's own previous surveys of parents in the district, including Tubman parents.

The 180 parents returned 81 completed surveys, representing a response rate of 45 percent (which district personnel report is more responsive than the 28 percent return rate for some comparable district surveys). We are confident that the parents who participated in the survey accurately represent the range of opinions existing among parents in this school; that general conclusions based on patterns of responses are correct within an acceptable margin of error; that the responses can identify strengths and weaknesses of the school from the parents' point of view; and that the number of returns is large enough

to permit reliable analyses of relationships among the variables. Moreover, some of the information from the survey was confirmed from other sources of information.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that fewer than one-half of the parents participated in the survey, thus increasing the probable error rate when generalizing to the total parent populations. In particular, the sample could be skewed in favor of parents with higher levels of education. The significance of this possibility will become apparent later, when we demonstrate a positive relationship between level of education and knowledge of and satisfaction with the school. Since those parents with lower levels of education tend to be the most critical of the school, the amount of criticism could be greater than reflected in our sample. This possible source of bias should be kept in mind when reading about the survey findings.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Origins and First-Year History of Tubman

Few could have predicted the tumultuous journey that lay ahead of the Tubman school when it first opened its doors in September 1994. In many ways, however, the events that followed were set in motion well before the school's first day. The WestEd research team originally agreed to collect data solely for the current year of operation at the Tubman charter school; however, upon conducting many of the initial background interviews, it became clear that the school's present operation is inextricably intertwined with events related to its inception and first year of operation. For this reason, the research team has compiled a brief history of those key events and conditions that have largely shaped the school into what it is today.

Origin of the Charter School at Tubman Village

Upon hearing that the Governor of California had signed charter school legislation in September 1992, a parent called a member of the San Diego Unified School Board in the fall of 1992 to inquire about the possibility of establishing a Waldorf charter school in the district. That board member had been aware of Waldorf schools for approximately five years and had made an effort to become informed about them. In October of 1992, this board member and another visited a public school in Milwaukee that used Waldorf methods. Both had been favorably impressed with its apparent effectiveness in educating less-advantaged children and reducing violence in schools. The board member suggested to the parent interested in establishing a Waldorf charter school that they discuss the idea further and a dialog began. Both the parent and his wife soon became strong advocates for the establishment of a Waldorf charter school, and he eventually became the principal author of the charter petition.

Ambiguities in the Charter Petition

The Tubman charter petition was written hurriedly by one principal author whose association with the school ended shortly after the school opened. Even founders of the school agreed that the language in the petition outlining the school's purposes (including the area of power and how it would be distributed among the governing committees) tended to be somewhat vague and to lack measurable outcomes. This is attributable in part to the difficulty of quantifying some elements of the Waldorf program. Consequently, the document contains very limited guidance about assessing the school's progress for either internal or external evaluators.

"Evaluation is an issue. It's difficult to determine how to evaluate a program that emphasizes the whole human being. The purposes of the Waldorf program are difficult to quantify."

— a parent who authored the Waldorf charter petition

Moreover, the petition did not reflect many of the district's guidelines for approving charter schools — e.g., following state curriculum frameworks. For this and other reasons, the district's Charter Schools Petition Review Committee recommended that the Board deny the petition. Though initially there was a lack of consensus among board members, on November 2, 1993, the San Diego Unified School Board unanimously approved the "Waldorf Charter School" proposal.

Designation as an "Overflow School"

On November 2, 1993, when the board granted the charter for what was to become the Tubman charter school, neither the charter petitioners nor the district had identified a site for the school. Five months later, on April 5, 1994, the Board acted to reopen the former John Muir campus as an overflow school to relieve overcrowded schools in the mid-city area. At that point, the needs of the district to establish an overflow school began to intersect with the need to find a site for what was then called the Waldorf Charter School of San Diego. On April 29, 1994, the Board approved the use of the Muir campus as the site for the Waldorf Charter School despite concerns that it compromised the choice provisions of the charter law.¹⁴ These concerns relate to the fact that, on the one hand, students from overcrowded schools who are assigned to overflow schools are mandated to attend the overflow schools; on the other hand, the law states that no student can be compelled to attend a charter school.

Parents in the affected "overflow" neighborhoods were given the option of having their children attend either Tubman or another school in the city. Thus, the Tubman charter school solved the problem of finding a facility — a problem common to many other start-up charter schools in California. However, accompanying this expedient solution to both the school's and district's dilemmas was a whole set of complications that continued to affect the school's second-year operation, including significant confusion on the part of some parents as to whether they had options other than sending their children to Tubman.

"I suggested considering the overflow site as a possible site for the Waldorf-inspired school. The Board agreed to locate the school at the former John Muir Elementary School site."

— a founder of the Tubman school

Staffing Under a Compressed Organizational Timeline

Until the district granted a facility to the Waldorf Charter School, the founders of the school were unable to take the actions necessary to open a school, including hiring a staff, obtaining instructional materials, and informing parents of their options before the following school year. The school was not assured a facility until April 29, 1994, four months before school was to open. Consequently, the timeline for organizing the school was very tight.

Personnel selection, for example, took place very late in the recruitment season. According to interviews, the school sometimes had to settle for second choices. The limited time available for planning and personnel selection also meant that few staff members were either familiar with the school district's administrative procedures or with Waldorf education.

Although the director, who was selected by the founders, was both knowledgeable about charter schools and one of few African Americans prominently associated with Waldorf education, he had never been an administrator in a public school system, let alone charged with starting a public school from scratch. Recognizing that more administrative support was needed, the district placed a retired administrator at the school two days a week. Some believe the school suffered from not having an experienced administrator familiar with district operations involved from the beginning. Also, hiring the director long after the petition was developed may have contributed to disparities that developed between the content of the approved charter petition and the actual priorities that evolved at the school.

In addition, most teachers hired during this compressed timeline did not have an in-depth understanding of or experience and adequate training in Waldorf education. In fact, in the first year, the school was able to hire only four teachers with prior Waldorf experience out of a total of 13. In addition to the four experienced teachers, one teacher had Waldorf certification but no experience, and one other had attended Waldorf schools but had no Waldorf training or teaching experience in Waldorf schools. The director believes that, had he had more time, he could have found more staff who were experienced and/or could have trained those who had neither training nor experience in Waldorf education.

Early Loss of Key Parent Leaders

The husband and wife who initiated the idea of a charter school modeled after the Waldorf system of education withdrew their children from Tubman within a few months of its opening, having decided to return their children to the private Waldorf school in Spring Valley with which they had been actively involved for several years. The husband reported that they had not originally intended to enroll their children in Tubman but at the

time they had some differences with some members of the private Waldorf school community related to the members' concern that Tubman would draw enrollment away from the private school. He noted that very few parents from the private Waldorf school transferred to Tubman; consequently, the differences were resolved and they renewed their affiliation with the private school. The husband had been the primary author of the Tubman charter petition, and the wife had selected the first director of the school and participated actively in the selection of other staff. As a result, the school was very quickly left without the full participation of two of its strongest advocates. The husband continued to be a community member-at-large of the school's governance council, but at a much reduced level of participation compared to his earlier role as a founder.

Two other parents who had been involved in initial plans for the charter school remained throughout the school year, but the husband, a member of the governance council, became embroiled in a conflict with the school's director. Outside observers commented that at a time when advocacy for the school from the founding parents would have been most valuable and needed, those parents had either departed or were in conflict with the school's administrator. These conditions only exacerbated the organizational problems the school was experiencing from having an inexperienced staff working under the pressures of a compressed timeline.

Legal Controversies

During the first year, two suits were brought against Tubman school that contributed to a somewhat guarded atmosphere at the school. First, the California School Employees Association (CSEA) filed a complaint against SDCS regarding the way the charter petition was ratified within the district. California charter school law requires that a charter petition be signed by not less than 50% of the teachers currently employed at one of the district's schools or by not less than 10% of the teachers from the district in which the charter school wishes to locate (SB 1448).

The CSEA charged that the signatures of four of the six teachers from the Community Home Education Program on the petition did not meet the legal requirements described in the legislation because the program, according to CSEA's complaint, had little relationship to the charter school. The participation of those teachers, they argued, did not constitute an appropriate consideration of teacher support in the district for the charter school. The suit was subsequently settled in favor of the district (i.e., the petition was deemed valid), but the court required several other changes be made to the Tubman charter petition. The board later approved amendments to the charter in such areas as labor policies for district staff who choose to work at the charter school, fiscal audits and a clause stating that the school would be nonsectarian.

The California Teachers Association (CTA) brought the second suit against Tubman as part of a statewide action against charter schools. One of the complaints in

CTA's pending suit is similar to the CSEA complaint regarding the ratification of the petition. The CTA's much broader complaint contends that the implementation of the Tubman charter school is generally not consistent with requirements of the state law authorizing charter schools. That suit is now in the discovery process.

Complaints of Parents and Teachers

Another series of complaints was voiced by a small but very vocal group of parents and teachers during the first year. The following description of those complaints was gathered from various sources, including background interviews, media reports and other interviews of parents and teachers. Two teachers objected to the three-week staff training the school conducted in the late summer of 1994, just before the charter school opened. Much of the three-week training took the form of lectures and a discussion of the philosophy upon which the Waldorf education is based, Anthroposophy.¹⁵ Their complaint regarding this training included claims that it did not sufficiently address day-to-day classroom challenges and that the content was sectarian¹⁶ and of a highly personal nature. Other criticisms revolved around the educational director and claims of misleading statements and unfair treatment, particularly in relation to teacher retention and evaluation. One of the teachers who was asked not to return to Tubman continues to object to the process used to arrive at these personnel decisions. Because of issues related to retention and evaluation, the governance council became embroiled in a struggle with the director over control of the teacher evaluation process. Some of these complaints were later filed formally with the Board of Education and the Office of the Superintendent.

Also during the first year, several parents expressed complaints to the school's director and to the governance council regarding such things as the rate of their children's progress, the director's lack of responsiveness and so forth. Other complaints focused on the lack of academic rigor in the classroom, lax grading and no homework. Discipline problems were also raised. One parent conjectured that a teacher from a private Waldorf school had limited experience with the behavioral problems associated with a public school. Meanwhile, other complaints focused on how teacher dismissals were handled during the year. Several of the parents said their complaints were not adequately addressed. Consequently, these issues continued to linger unresolved into the summer, leading to a chain of events — including a series of controversial newspaper articles¹⁷ — that continued to be of concern to teachers into the school's second year.

Teacher Turnover

The school has experienced a high rate of teacher turnover. Some of the complaints discussed above relate to the turnover and may partially explain it. Of the 13 teachers who were hired during the first year, eight left the school by the beginning of the following year, in most cases because their contracts were not renewed by the school.

This considerable loss of staff meant that a majority of the staff in the second year was entirely new. During the second school year, two more teachers left. This turnover exacerbated the problems of low staff morale and continuity that have reportedly plagued the school from its beginning.

Tubman's Second-Year History

Opening of Second School on Site

During the summer before the second year, the district decided to take several actions in response to the complaints and the vulnerabilities raised by not having an alternate school for overflow students to attend. First, the district decided to hire an outside agency to evaluate the school's program. Second, in the meantime, the district made plans to open an alternate, traditional public school on the same overflow site. Thus, parents who were assigned to the Tubman site as part of the district's overflow program now could choose between two options — the charter school or a conventional district school. By placing a second option on the same site, the district reduced its vulnerability to accusations of forcing students and parents into the charter school. The district was susceptible to such accusations in the first year of the Tubman charter operation because, as stated earlier, the charter was the only option on that site and, although parents did have options to send their children to overflow schools other than Tubman, there is some evidence from WestEd's interview data that these options were not uniform or clearly communicated to parents.

Third, in order to justify leaving the school open the next year, the district surveyed parents who were part of the busing program to find out whether there were enough parents who were interested in sending their children to Tubman by choice. Eighty percent of the parents who responded to the survey (three-fourths of the school's total population) wished to return their children to Tubman the following year. In light of these results, the district gave the director the green light to proceed into the school's second year and opened the conventional school on the same site.

Not everyone agreed, however, that opening a second school at the site was a good approach. Some district officials were concerned about the additional costs and administrative inefficiencies associated with operating two schools at the same location. The financial implications of maintaining this second school have continued to worry district officials during the second year. Yet, as our interviews revealed, some Tubman charter school staff believe that the unofficial administrative support provided by the other school's seasoned principal helped them in the long run.

Test Results

In the summer of 1995, the faculty received the results of Tubman students' performance on the Abbreviated Stanford Achievement Test (ASAT) taken the preceding spring as part of the district's systemwide testing program. As the team's interviews with teachers and administrators indicate, these results influenced the faculty's instructional planning and curriculum for the upcoming school-year.

Tubman's percentile rankings on the ASAT, which includes tests of reading comprehension, language expression and math applications for grades two through six in some schools and grades one through six in others, were lower than those of comparable schools. In reading comprehension and math applications, the Tubman scores were reported for grades two through six; in language expression, for grade five only. According to national norms, Tubman's scores in reading comprehension placed it at the 21st percentile; in math applications, at the 25th percentile; and in language expression, at the 22nd percentile. These rankings are 11 to 23 percentile points below similar scores at Birney and Jefferson Elementary Schools, neighboring schools that have similar student populations.

One staff member noted that the teachers were "shocked" by the rankings. She also noted that they came away from that meeting with a clearer understanding of how important these test results are and with a determination to adjust their curriculum and assessment practices to better prepare students for these tests in the 1995-96 school year. The results of the 1996 districtwide testing are not yet available.

Governance Council Conflict and Resignation of Principal

As mentioned earlier, the dispute between the school's director and the governance council, which began to fester in the middle of the first year, reached a climax during the second year. It ended in the director's resignation before the end of the school year. During the first year, the director notified a substantial portion of the faculty that they would not be rehired for the following year. Members of the governance council maintained that they had not been sufficiently involved in these decisions. The director claimed that, as the education director and as an official employee of the district, he had full control and was accountable for all decisions about professional personnel. In addition, according to some council members, the director was not forthcoming with documentation on his faculty evaluations and refused to disclose evaluation criteria or even the format of the evaluation instrument. Apparently some papers documenting the director's evaluation process, which were requested by the council, were destroyed when a kiln in the director's office caught fire. The arguments over this issue intensified during the fall of the second year.

In November of 1995, the council requested an audit of a fundraising event held the previous spring. The audit disclosed that funds raised during this event had been misappropriated. The teacher in charge of the event submitted a resignation early in 1996. Members of the council, however, became incensed when they learned that the reason accepted by the principal for the resignation was unrelated to the misappropriation of funds. Council members were particularly upset when they learned that the responsible teacher became eligible for subsequent unemployment compensation because the director had accepted the teacher's resignation on the basis of "scheduling conflicts."

After a heated discussion during a council meeting in early March of the second year, the director resigned. The next morning, when he offered to withdraw his resignation, the council refused to accept. One day of mediation led the district to decide to reassign the director to a support position within the school and to appoint the principal from the other public school at the Tubman Village site as acting principal of the charter school while he continued as principal of the second school.

Summary

This record of Tubman's first two years reveals the many challenges that are inherent in transforming the ideals of social reform movements into action. The eagerness to seize the opportunity to find housing for the school resulted in solving one of the most perplexing problems of start-up charter schools but at the same time created a host of others. Giving authority and responsibility to school founders with limited experience involved substantial risk for both the district and for the school founders. For the Board and the district administration, attempting to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability was and continues to be a daunting task. The myriad problems — a short organizational timeline, the almost inevitable challenges from employee interests, the early loss of key leaders and the difficulty of introducing an educational concept developed in a small-scale private setting into the complexity of a major urban school system — taxed the resources and idealism of those involved.

It is important to remember, however, that any site-based governed school, and especially charter schools, are bound to face daunting personnel and organizational issues that can lead to disgruntled parents and even community outcry. In light of this predicament, several questions remain: Could the governance system at Tubman have been better structured by its founders to handle these challenges? Should the school district have played more of a role in the early stages of the school to provide support to Tubman? And finally, what steps can be taken in the future to enhance the learning environment at Tubman? The findings and the recommendations that follow will attempt to provide insight and to suggest ways that may improve such site-based reform efforts in the future.

Chronology of Events

- | | | |
|------|------|---|
| 1992 | Aug | California Legislature passes the Charter Schools Act of 1992 (SB 1448) |
| | Sept | California charter schools legislation signed by Governor |
| | Oct | Two school Board members visit a Waldorf school in Milwaukee, WI |
| 1993 | Jan | California charter schools legislation effective |
| | Mar | San Diego Unified School Board member discusses with some parents the possibility of starting a charter school based on the Waldorf approach |
| | Aug | Parent founder submits Waldorf Charter School of San Diego petition to Board |
| | Sept | Superintendent's "16 Expectations" faxed to parent founder at request of Board |
| | Oct | District staff submit negative review of petition |
| | Nov | Superintendent recommends denying petition Board approves it unanimously |
| 1994 | Apr | School Board approves use of Muir School as an overflow site; in a later board meeting, designates the site as a charter/overflow school for 94-95 school year and approves as location of Tubman |
| | Sept | School opens under the name Harriet Tubman Village School, dropping reference to Waldorf |
| | Dec | California School Employees Association (CSEA) files petition alleging that the school's petition process was not legal |
| 1995 | Feb | Court denies CSEA's petition but orders district to amend the charter to comply with EC 47605 |
| | Apr | Board approves amendments to school's petition (e.g., labor policies, fiscal audits and a clause stating the school will be nonsectarian) as directed by the courts |
| | June | Most teachers reassigned, not rehired or leave the school |
| | July | Parents report to Board about school's alleged sectarianism Board asks staff to conduct an evaluation Board votes to create another conventional school on-site |
| | Aug | District surveys Tubman parents: 75% respond; 80% of those choose to return their children to the school |
| 1996 | Mar | Director resigns, then is reassigned as a support person. |
| | May | WestEd releases final report to SDCS district |

FINDINGS: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Findings section of this report addresses the major research areas that were identified in our analysis of the legislation, district criteria and the charter petition, including four main sections. The first, drawing primarily from classroom observations and teacher interviews, discusses some select features of Tubman's educational program. The second section discusses Tubman staffing characteristics, beliefs and approaches to their work. The third section is devoted to findings that relate to governance, including information collected from governance council members, and also briefly discusses information relating to sectarian safety/health and issues. The final section is a discussion of parent perspectives, drawing upon data from surveys and interviews about parent satisfaction.

Educational Goals and Practices

The following descriptions of Tubman's educational program and curriculum and instruction practices were gleaned from short observations of all the Tubman charter school teachers during classroom instruction and from individual interviews following each of the observations. Where relevant, we have integrated parent interview information and survey results of their impressions of instructional practices. As previously stated, our purpose in conducting the classroom observations was not to determine the quality of instruction or its content but to contextualize and confirm some of the information collected during interviews.

An underlying premise of the charter school movement is that schools will be given greater flexibility to experiment with innovative approaches — from which other schools can learn. In the spirit of the charter school movement, the Tubman school is pursuing an alternative approach to traditional public education by implementing a modified version of the Waldorf private school model. Whether or not the version of Waldorf that the Tubman school is using could be considered truly innovative as compared to other public schools, or for that matter other Waldorf schools, is still unknown since we did not collect systematic data from other school sites. Nevertheless, classroom observations and interviews with teachers and parents indicate that the school is implementing a program that is to some degree characteristic of some of the Waldorf concepts outlined in the charter petition. The following examples represent *impressions* — by no means a comprehensive picture — of the curriculum and instructional practices we saw at Tubman.

Classroom activities emphasize learning through imitation, repetition, recitation and rhythmic exercises.

Observations and interviews indicate that students are taught through imitation of the teachers' actions or through repetition and recitations by the whole class in unison, individually and sometimes in rhythm. In early grades, for example, children are taught to copy drawings made by the teacher and trace geometric figures and objects. According to teachers, mastering these drawings helps to develop the fundamental skills necessary to do well in writing and math.

Repetition, especially as it relates to counting and math, is also employed, sometimes in conjunction with some music or rhyme activity. In some instances, teachers had their students count out loud during certain activities, such as passing out snacks, drawing objects on the board, or reciting multiplication tables or addition and subtraction in unison to a musical beat or as they step forward and backward.

In other instances, students read, recite or play-act a fairy tale or fable, both in unison or individually. For example, in one class the children's attention was directed to a passage on the board that was then read in chorus. In another classroom, children repeated the lines to a fairy tale after the teacher while simultaneously acting out the story.

Text From a Teacher's Lesson Plan

The kindergarten program allows the preschool child to live in an environment where rhythm and ritual can be the foundation for healthy imitation. The kindergarten parallels a home environment and is a celebration of life designed to instill reverence, awe and a sense of beauty. . . we have a child centered curriculum that allows the child to develop on his own time. The Waldorf program is based in the belief of the "metamorphosis" of the child. Contraction and expansion are very real forces that allows [sic] the child to act freely during the activities inside and outside the classroom.

— "Main Lesson: Kindergarten of Butterflies, 1996"

Classroom activities emphasize kinesthetic and fine motor skill development.

School staff emphasize the development of kinesthetic and fine motor skills of students through such activities as hand-weaving (knitting), sewing and related crafts. The school also employs a full-time teacher, with over 20 years of experience in private Waldorf schools, to teach knitting and other crafts. In one classroom, for example, during

a free-play session, children were hand-sewing pieces of felt together into gnome dolls and making finger loom weavings from yarn.

The curriculum emphasizes literature, the arts and music.

According to Tubman staff, the school emphasizes selected literature, the arts and music that is comparable to the emphasis placed on reading, math and science. The school, for example, employs a part-time music teacher. Classroom observations indicate that teachers employ drama and music as vehicles for engaging children in stories as well as in mathematics.

Several classrooms observed included musical activities, such as singing or playing musical instruments. During one observation, students played a pentatonic flute in unison — almost all hitting the right notes — to a rendition of “Hot Cross Buns” by imitating the finger placements of the teacher who stood in front of them.

Several teachers report using storytelling, myths, legends and fairy tales selected from a list developed for Waldorf schools. Classroom observation also confirmed the use of fairy tales. For example, in one classroom a Vietnamese Cinderella fable, *Tam's Slipper*, was printed on the chalkboard accompanied by a colored chalk drawing. The whole class read the story in chorus, and then smaller groups, table by table, did the same. In another class, children play-acted a story about 12 dancing princesses, moving around the room and reciting lines after the teacher. The charter petition also mentions the use of this type of literature.

Adaptation and Modification of Program

The faculty report that they are striving to modify the Waldorf private school model to meet certain academic expectations of the district and the legal requirements of a public school. With regard to the school's educational program, some staff describe the school as “Waldorf-inspired.” Essentially, the school is at a crossroads — creating a hybrid program that, in the words of one teacher, “combines the best of Waldorf with the best of the district.”

From staff comments we can identify three significant areas of adaptation: 1) flexibility in the selection of instructional materials from both the Waldorf and district pool of resources; 2) recognition that creating a constructive multicultural experience is more complicated in a Waldorf public school setting than in a private one; and 3) use of assessment practices that combine tools appropriate to Waldorf education with tools that public schools must use to meet the general public's demand for educational accountability. These modifications are described in more detail below.

Teachers report having flexibility in selecting appropriate instructional materials and techniques.

Teachers report that while they follow the Waldorf curriculum outline and use its accompanying materials, they regard it as a guideline, not a prescription. They feel they have the latitude to exercise their professional judgment in selecting instructional approaches and materials from the Waldorf resource pool that are appropriate to their students.

One teacher states that teachers tend to regard Waldorf materials as the "pool of resources" from which they freely select and then adapt to the needs of the children. Another teacher, with extensive Waldorf teaching experience, stresses that he exercises flexibility in working with the children at Tubman. He said the Waldorf curriculum works well in private Waldorf schools, but it must be regarded as just an outline. The Waldorf developmental model is not designed for children "in San Diego and California in this time and this place," he adds. He emphasizes, therefore, that teachers must be flexible. A few other teachers emphasize that some Waldorf materials are not used if the teacher considers them to be inappropriate to a multicultural public school setting.

Teachers also report that in the current year they are using the district's textbooks more frequently. In particular, several teachers said they are selectively using the district's math and reading texts. One teacher, for instance, reports that he is using some of the texts adopted by the district in literature, reading and mathematics. In mathematics, he is also using the district's curriculum guides and the state framework. Some teachers also report that they are adjusting their teaching to cover the content of the districtwide testing program.

The school is integrating multicultural elements into the curriculum.

Members of the staff stated that the diverse backgrounds of the children at Tubman require a broader approach to curriculum than might be expected in a private Waldorf school setting. Some of those with experience in private Waldorf schools note that what might be acceptable there would not meet the demands of multicultural education in a public school.

The former director of the school stated that schoolwide observances in private Waldorf schools sometimes have a religious basis. He related that he retained the practice of schoolwide observances but changed the content significantly so that the observances became a "celebration of who's here, that is, a celebration of the roots and backgrounds of the children in the school and their families."

Teachers, other staff and parents report in interviews that the school is providing students with exposure to other cultures through a variety of methods, including schoolwide assemblies, celebrations of events observed by various racial/ethnic groups and stories about certain ethnic groups such as African American children.

The school employs varied student assessment practices.

The teachers report using a variety of ways to assess student performance, some of which are well suited to the Waldorf approach and others that satisfy the assessment and accountability needs of the district. The interview information and other materials available to the study team also indicate that teachers assess their students' performance using several different methods, including:

- portfolios,
- in-class performance,
- teacher-made tests (with at least some focusing on objectives in the petition),
- open-ended quizzes,
- timed skills tests,
- shape and pattern-forming ability (kindergarten),
- tests accompanying district texts,
- the district's Quick Reading Test, and
- the required districtwide tests (ASAT).

The school is attempting, despite the uneasiness of some, to be responsive to district tests and academic standards.

The current principal reports that she had discussed the districtwide test results (the ASAT scores) with the Tubman faculty in the summer of 1995. She indicated that when she talked about the importance of test scores and shared the test data, the teachers were "shocked." From that point on she reports that they were very willing to make the changes necessary to assure that Tubman students are well prepared for the ASAT. Some teachers also report that they are doing more testing in class to prepare students for the tests.

This responsiveness to the district's test results, however, sets up an uneasy tension. How do charter schools offer a nonconventional alternative school program while at the same time trying to conform to district norms about what constitutes good academic performance? While some staff view the influence of district standards as good,

others worry about how it adulterates the integrity of the Waldorf approach. Some teachers feel pressure to help their students do well on tests while avoiding compromising what they think is important to teach and when it is appropriate to teach it.

A few teachers confide that they feel challenged by the question of how to merge the instruction of skills required by conventional standardized tests with Waldorf priorities. For example, one teacher notes that in private Waldorf schools every child is not expected to be reading by the end of first grade; reading is not expected until the end of the third grade. She feels that public school children are pressured to do things faster, even when they are not developmentally ready.

To the extent that some aspects of accountability depend on standardized, norm-referenced tests, many of the arguments that arise in the Waldorf context regarding alignment between the test and the program are strikingly similar to arguments that arise in conventional educational settings. Because an analysis of the validity of these alignment concerns is beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to say that alignment issues exist at the school and may tend to be more acute in unique charter school settings because the discrepancy between curriculum content and test content may be greater in the charter school.

Staff demonstrates a willingness to adapt to their context, a resilience in the face of adversity and a readiness to learn from the past.

Despite a trying first year, followed by a second year with almost all new staff, old controversies from the previous year and new ones leading to the director's resignation, the staff continues to plan optimistically for the third year. Willing to comply with the requirements of a public school setting, Tubman staff report that they are rethinking how best to modify the Waldorf curriculum, especially given the needs of the school's diverse student population and the concerns of the public. Tubman's former director also states that he recognizes that some Waldorf practices may be inappropriate in a public school, i.e., those with religious implications. In addition, as mentioned before, teachers are now changing the sequence and content of instruction (e.g., starting reading earlier) in response to district standardized test results.

FINDINGS: STAFF CHARACTERISTICS AND BEI IEFS

Staff Characteristics

The information in this section is derived from several sources. Most of the information comes from the interviews with eight classroom teachers who instruct kindergarten through grade 6. We asked teachers to describe, among other things, the school's educational goals, their teaching approaches and philosophies. This information was further supported by classroom observation data. Also, parents volunteered some information about the teachers in the course of the interviews. Where relevant, we have referred to selected findings from the parent survey as well.

Tubman employs a wide range of individuals to carry-out the functions of its school.

Data reported by Tubman indicate that the school employs approximately 30 full-time people to carry out the operation of the school. In addition to the director and eight full-time teachers, two kindergarten teachers and one teacher for each of the remaining grades, there are resource specialists, classroom aides and others. Administrative staff are also hired to help with the school's management (see Table IV.1).

Collectively, the faculty has varied experience with both public school teaching and teaching in Waldorf and other school settings.

- Five of the eight full-time teachers have teaching certificates.
- Before joining Tubman, one teacher had more than 20 years of teaching experience; one had more than 18 years of classroom teaching experience; most had three to nine years of experience; and one had no full-time classroom experience.
- The former director of the school and three teachers have had from seven to over 20 years of experience with Waldorf education in private schools.
- Several have had related work experiences, i.e., building a school in another country, starting a preschool, counseling and language instruction in third world countries.

Table IV.1*Tubman Charter School Staff Profile**

| Staffing area | Number of staff | Breakdown of staff within each staffing area |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Full-time classroom teachers | 8 | 2 teaching grade K 1 each teaching grades 1 - 6 |
| Resource specialists | 8 * | 2 lead craft teachers 2 music teachers 1 physical education teacher 1 special education teacher 2 language specialists 1 lead gardening teacher |
| Classroom aides | 8 | 4 full-time |
| Administrative | 3 | 1 public school administrator 1 administrative assistant 1 secretary |
| Other staff | 3.75 | 0.75 time guidance assistant 1.5 custodial staff 0.5 librarian 1.0 health assistant |

* The number of resource specialists varies. Some resource specialists, as well as teachers and aides, work across many tasks, so the numbers presented for each specific subject area represent the roles that teachers and others play as resource specialists. In addition, several of these subject area teachers also have part-time assistants working with them who are not counted among the total number of resource specialists.

Table IV.2***Certification Status and Teaching Experience of Tubman Charter School Teachers***

| Teacher characteristics | Number of teachers | Breakdown of teachers by characteristics |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Total number of full-time classroom teachers | 8 | |
| Certified teachers | 5 | 3 with CA and/or out-of-state certification with non-U.S. certification |
| Teaching experience: prior non-public school experience | 5 | 2 in Waldorf settings 2 in non-Waldorf settings 1 in both Waldorf and non-Waldorf settings |
| prior public school experience | 7 | 5 with 0 - 10 total years exp. 1 with 10 - 20 total years exp. 2 with 20 - 25 total years exp. |

Teacher Beliefs**Teachers express dedication to their work and to Tubman.**

Several teachers interviewed indicated that it was exciting to be involved with the creation of a new school. At the same time, they report working long hours, including weekends, to carry out their vision of the school. All teachers report attending regularly scheduled committee meetings and inservice meetings; some have attended summer Waldorf training sessions on their own time and at their own expense. All say they plan to return to the school next year.

Teachers believe in the importance of balancing students' affective and cognitive needs, especially for some students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A common theme emerging from our interviews is the importance teachers place on helping children feel secure and developing their self-confidence, personal responsibility and self-acceptance as well as the ability to be courteous, expressive and mutually respectful. Some teachers said that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds sometimes do not have the strong family support they need and "imitate" negative behavior learned in those contexts at school. These children, they believe, often need more self-confidence and "emotional" development. Other teachers, however, point out that some children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds do come from cultures where the concept of family is important and the environment positive.

Teachers express the way children learn, in part, as a function of balance and harmony. Specifically, teachers mention the importance of achieving balance in students' lives, particularly between the emotions (e.g., through artistic development) and the intellect (e.g., through reading), and also between self-motivation and teamwork. Several refer to the need to teach the "heart, head, and hands" of each child, which includes personal values, self-esteem, self-expression and handicrafts. This theme of balance is also echoed in several parts of the charter petition. For example, the charter states as one of its purposes, that children should "develop their intellectual powers in harmony with both the feeling and active aspects of nature."

One parent echoed these comments, saying she highly values the "whole child approach, not just focusing on the head." She wants her daughter to "learn about the heart and the hands before being pushed into the cognitive. When schools push academics too early, they lose the children. They need to be kids first, digging in the soil, dancing, doing drama and the arts."

Teachers believe it is important to provide a family-like, nurturing, and welcoming environment.

The school also aims to create a "family feel." One of the founding parents comments, "The school provides a strong family structure and community involvement. This became a more important goal after [one parent] made home visits . . . and saw that this was missing in the current school programs. The parents were interested and engaged with the idea of a Waldorf school. . . This is particularly true for Hispanics and African Americans, who place a high value on a sense of family and community."

In fact, parent interviews reflect that they are confident in their children's teachers and appreciate their interest in their children's well-being:

"The school's strongest quality is the teacher's enthusiasm."

"Charter schools attract well-qualified teachers who care about children."

"... is] a gifted teacher, who creates a real sense of peer support in the classroom."

"My daughter has thrived on the individual attention she's received from her teacher."

"... the total commitment of the teachers, the open-door policy and family togetherness in the classrooms."

"[The teachers] really care a lot about kids."

Several parents appreciatively commented on the teachers' welcoming attitudes toward them. The former director said that one of the school's goals is to be different from conventional schools by being "more homelike and domestic, less laboratorial; more familial and less professorial."

Teachers espouse a common, yet eclectic, set of assumptions about child development and how learning occurs.

While teachers expressed a varied set of educational purposes for the school, there was a coherent set of principles relayed about how learning occurs. In particular, several teachers who were interviewed expressed the belief that learning occurs in a known developmental sequence; evidence of that belief was also observed in some classrooms. They believe that to write and draw well, children must first develop their fine motor skills. In kindergarten, children were engaged in tracing activities (crayon rubbings). The teacher explained that children progress in their tracings from tangible objects to abstract geometric shapes, which, it is assumed, will develop their artistic talents and create a foundation for geometry and writing skills. They also learn to copy paintings of objects in a sequence progressing through the elements of a picture of a home: first a garden, then a house, then doors, windows and window frames.

The teachers interviewed also expressed the belief that student learning is enhanced when the teaching of facts is associated with musical and body rhythms and other physical activities. Teacher statements, which are consistent with our observations of their classroom activities, confirm this apparently deep-seated belief. It appears to be characteristic of the school to have teachers lead students in movements, songs and choral chants as they count numbers and recite selections from poetry and other literature. Students were seen participating, for example, in drills involving marching and clapping to rhythms.

Teachers believe the school provides continuous learning, evaluative and professional development opportunities.

Some teachers feel that Tubman provides a strong collegial and supportive professional development environment. Most teachers have been involved in professional development activities. For example, all but one new teacher has received between 15 and 45 days of Waldorf training since joining the school. The training was provided by trainers from several Waldorf schools during Saturday workshops or summer sessions.

The school is in the process of using several self evaluation approaches. First, according to teachers, a Waldorf team came to review the school (Waldorf Institute of Southern California). Second, the school's former director observed nearly all teachers this year, often at regular intervals, and usually provided written feedback although the helpfulness of this process was not known. Some teachers also mentioned that experienced teachers act as mentors to teachers with less teaching experience or Waldorf training.

Related Issues

The policy of keeping teachers and students together from one year to the next has not been effectively implemented because of high teacher turnover.

A significant feature of the Waldorf approach to education is that teachers stay with the same group of students as they move from grade to grade. Parents said in interviews that they understand and appreciate this intent. The intent is clear in the charter petition:

A tradition in the Waldorf Educational philosophy is that a teacher remain with his or her class until the class graduates from the school. . . Although teachers cannot be compelled to make such a commitment, it is that kind of spirit that the school will be looking for in its staff. (II.C.4.b.)

Yet the turnover in the school staff between the first and second year of the school's operation defeats this intent for at least half the students in the school. Seven of the 13 faculty members left after the first year, and during the second year two teachers left. This early tendency toward rapid turnover raises a question about whether the school can sustain its intent.

The school provides services for limited English proficient and special needs students, but some teachers believe that the pull-out nature of these services is disruptive.

The school provides English as a Second Language but no native language instruction for students who are identified as limited-English proficient. In addition to some teachers who are bilingual, the school also employs language aides in the classroom. The school also reports that it has a district specialist come in to work with children who are identified with disabilities. Several teachers interviewed, however, felt strongly that when these children are pulled out of class, their emotional development — which is believed to enable their academic development — is disrupted. One teacher explained, for instance, that when her limited-English proficient students are pulled out during a free-play period in class, they miss a critical opportunity during the day to be exploratory, creative and engage in kinesthetic activities. As a result, they come back unable to focus as readily as the other students on more instructional tasks.

FINDINGS: GOVERNANCE AND OTHER ISSUES

Central to both the charter and the Waldorf approach is the concept of site-based management. Since a large degree of regulatory and decisionmaking authority is transferred to charter schools, the smooth operation of their governance structures is critical. If governance structures break down and issues remain unresolved, a charter school runs the risk of not having a proper oversight mechanism and therefore become less accountable to parents and the larger public. Therefore, in examining the progress of the Tubman charter school, the research team focused in depth on the issue of governance.

The governance council is the main decisionmaking body of the school identified in the charter petition. There are, however, other organizational structures in the school that to a varying degree advise the council or carry out additional decisionmaking responsibilities. They include the "Faculty of Teachers," which is most notably given primary responsibility for pedagogy (i.e., curriculum and instruction as outlined in the petition). There is also a more informal group of faculty and staff that meet. Finally, there is the Parent Advisory Council. These are described in more detail in Table IV.3.

The Governance Council

The governance council operates under a set of by-laws, which are currently being amended. Key features of the governance council in the first year include: 1) membership consisting of ten members— five faculty members and five parents; 2) a selection process in which two of the five parents are elected to the council by their peers, while the others are appointed by faculty; and 3) voting rules that require a majority (and aspire to consensus) of six of the ten members in order to act, provided at least eight members are present. In the second year, there were five parents and four teachers represented, along with the director.

Meetings are open and are held regularly.

The governance council has been meeting regularly during the past two years and at least once a month this year. These meetings, with the exception of the executive sessions, have always been open to the public. Recently, fewer parents have been attending the governance council meetings as observers, which has been attributed to the fact that a majority of the dissatisfied parents left Tubman at the end of last year. A meeting agenda is usually posted near the front door of the school. Past minutes are routinely circulated among the governance council members and are available to other parents upon request.

Table IV.3*Tubman's Governance and Decisionmaking Bodies*

| | Governance Council | College of Teachers | Faculty and Staff | Parent Advisory Council |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Membership | 10 members: 5 staff (director and 4 teachers) and 5 parents. | All teachers who wish to be members are admitted. Other staff with special interests in education may also become members | All faculty and staff. | All parents are eligible. 4 officers: 2 co-chairs (one staff, one parent) |
| Representation | Staff, parents, and one member from the community at large (not currently being exercised) | Primarily teaching and professional staff, but any staff with special interest also | All faculty and staff | As above, officers elected by parents |
| Elected or Volunteer | By election — staff members by staff; 2 parents by teachers, 3 parents by parents | Anyone can volunteer to join | Anyone can volunteer to join | Any parent can volunteer to join |
| Sphere of Decision-making Authority | Budget Development of evaluation plans School accountability Design and organization of reporting to parents Recruitment and hiring Recommends firing Serves also as Title I School Site Council | Pedagogy (Curriculum & Instruction) Organization of the classes May make recruiting and hiring suggestions | Day-to-day school problems and activities -- reports to the principal and Governance Council | Self-initiated projects that they present to the Governance Council. Parent participation and training piece of the Title I program, delegated and funded by Governance Council. |
| Subcommittees | Recruiting and hiring Finance Development Public Relations Mediation and conflict resolution Resource devpt. | No standing committees | Playground Code of student conduct Emergency plans Festivals and assemblies Multicultural education | No standing committees |

Source: Data collected from Tubman staff interviews, May 1996

The council has taken proactive steps to problem solving, but has sometimes been unclear about its level of authority or the right course of action to take.

This year, the council has reported taking proactive steps that should noticeably improve fiscal accountability (e.g., reviewing budget statements regularly). In addition, council members are calling for clarification of their authority and responsibilities. These actions are being taken in response to the obstacles and challenges encountered in the council's first year of operation, problems that seemed rooted in the way decisionmaking authority was structured rather than with the members of the council.

An ongoing set of issues facing the council concerns the lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of the governance council, the faculty and the director in making personnel decisions. Dating back to at least December 1994, the council has been in conflict with the director over his unilateral control of personnel decisions. Minutes from a recent council meeting cited the problem as a "lack of communication between faculty and administration, a lack of faculty decisions regarding hiring, and a lack of site-based management," among other things.

Specifically, council members raised concerns about the following topics: the decisionmaking process around personnel decisions; the director's reported lack of responsiveness in disclosing information regarding faculty evaluations; the director's perceived handling of a teacher accused of misappropriating funds; and the failure to submit events for council approval prior to their scheduling.

Governance council members also had doubts about their authority to fire the director or administrator of the school. Some governance council members considered firing the director near the end of the first year when the dispute arose over his authority to unilaterally fire or not renew the contracts of several teachers. However, they could not find authority to do so within the charter petition or by-laws and contracts of school staff are held by the district. Some council members reported they were confused about the district procedures to follow in order to take such an action. Some council members were reluctant to be immediately forthcoming to parents and the district about the more volatile issues they faced because they felt the school's future was in jeopardy. One member reported that other council members wanted to "sweep some issues under the rug."

Parents have opportunities to influence decisionmaking, but only a few participate.

According to the by-laws, parents' concerns always take precedence in the agenda over other business. In addition, the parents on the council say that they have mutually respectful and productive relations with teachers on the council, and that parents and teachers have equal influence on council decisions. However, it is understood that teachers control the pedagogy although some would like greater authority over these issues.

While the few parents who assume governance roles are actively involved, most other Tubman parents do not appear to attend council or other parent committees. According to council minutes from March 1995, the Parent Advisory Council reported that parents did not feel included in the life of the school. A year later, the same committee reported that attendance at Parent Advisory Council meetings had dropped from about twenty interested, nonmember parents per meeting to only five or six. Low morale within that committee was attributed at least in part to weak nonmember parent participation. In addition, only two of the parents on the council at the time of the study were elected by parents, and voter turnout the day they were elected was low.

One person interviewed said overall low parent participation may be due to parents' lack of information about the meetings and their proceedings. This person reported that the minutes are not widely distributed throughout the community and that minutes are posted in the teachers' lounge. Meetings also are not centrally located to parents whose children are bused, since most live miles away from the school.

OTHER ISSUES

WestEd and the SDCS staff agreed that this study was not intended to be an investigation of civil rights compliance, sectarianism or fiscal mismanagement. However, WestEd did ask very general questions with regard to these topics since they are provisions in the charter legislation, district guidelines and charter document and because these documents served as the basis for research framework. The following section provides information we obtained through our observations of classrooms, interviews with teachers and parents, and questions on the parent survey.

Sectarian Issues

As previously mentioned, last year the school was charged by certain individuals with teaching religion. Although making a determination of church and state legal issues falls outside the scope of this study, the following is some of the information brought to our attention on this topic.

Tubman parents and teachers — this year — report that religion is not being taught.

Parents on the school's governance council last year visited the school and found no basis for concluding that the school was teaching religion. These parents also visited the private Waldorf school in the area to inform themselves about the issue. In addition, over two-thirds of the parents surveyed believe that the school is not using or promoting religion; however, the other 29 percent are not sure about this issue. One parent who was interviewed concluded that there is no basis for believing the school is teaching religion. He says he has been monitoring the frequent cultural celebrations and finds no abuses.

Another parent, who withdrew her children from the school after the first year because she did not like the way it was being run, does not think religion was being taught at that time. Teachers interviewed also reported that religion was not being taught, but that some incidents last year may have been misconstrued as such. Even so, it appears that former teachers and others outside the school familiar with the Waldorf approach remain skeptical about the statements and concerned about religion being taught.

The school uses some unusual practices and materials, some of which may be susceptible to an interpretation that religion is being taught.

The study team did observe and hear of examples of activities that some people might interpret as odd, if not religious. For example:

- A teacher reports she uses the Old Testament to teach the history of the Hebrews but says that she does not teach the religious principles. She also says she supplements these lessons with stories of creation from other cultures.
- Last year the same teacher was reported to have "burned a candle," but she maintains the only purpose was to "set a thoughtful mood" and slow down the fast-paced, frenetic pace of modern life.
- Some classes that were observed by researchers started with a period of silence, but there was no mention of prayer.
- In a kindergarten class that was observed, children sang a song of thanks preceding a snack, but the song was devoid of overt religious words. The same classroom has pink gauze draped over furniture and a table in the back of the room, referred to as a "nature center," with symmetrically arranged objects from nature and a cloth "Mother Earth" doll.

In a Classroom Observation:

The class begins with an exercise that the teacher calls "Respecting the Silence." The teacher rings a bell to start a period of silence. The students raise their hands to communicate to one another and to the teacher that they know they are to begin the silence. Silence ensues. A student who is tardy approaches the open door to the classroom from outside. Some students wave at him to stay outside. He waits. The silence goes on for about a minute. The teacher says it is over. He reinforces the class's handling of the latecomer and the latecomer's response. (5 minutes)

Health and Safety

Again, we did not focus in-depth on the question of whether the school is violating health and safety codes, but some information on the topic is reported here.

Only minor discipline and safety issues are reported.

Eighty-two percent of the parents we questioned think the school is safe. Although a few parents and one teacher indicated that there had been some student fighting on campus, most reported that the campus had been free from violence. A few health and safety concerns, however, were raised. Some teachers complained about possible adverse health effects associated with dust from a vacant lot next to the school. WestEd observed some large wooden structures in the kindergarten classrooms that seemed to pose a threat to students because they were unstable. In addition, it was reported that there was a fire in the director's office last year caused by a kiln.

Criminal background checks on personnel are carried out.

According to the district's chief personnel officer, criminal record background checks have been conducted on all charter school employees in accordance with state law and district procedures for all public school employees.

Racial or Ethnic Discrimination

The following information on racial and ethnic discrimination was collected although, again, we did not systematically collect information on the topic.

No specific acts of discrimination were reported.

Nearly 85 percent of the parents knew of no instances whereby a student or family had been discriminated against on the basis of race or ethnicity. Two parents did indicate, however, that such discrimination had occurred (although we do not know the circumstances), while the remaining 12 percent were unsure. One of the parents interviewed alluded to dissatisfaction with the way her child was treated as a result of being in a fight.

FINDINGS: PARENT PERSPECTIVES

Information about parents was obtained primarily from: 1) interviews with a stratified sample of 17 parents (including four who are on the Governance Council); and 2) a questionnaire returned by 81 parents, representing 45 percent of the parents at the school. In addition, district data were used whenever possible to get a clearer indication of the types of students and parents at Tubman. Based on our analysis of these sources, we are able to provide the following information regarding: student demographics; students' original attendance area; parents' reasons for sending their children to Tubman; parents' satisfaction with and understanding of the Tubman school philosophy; parent involvement and communication with the school; and an examination of how parents' reported education level relates to satisfaction, understanding, participation and involvement.

Student Demographics

Tubman serves a diverse student population that is fairly representative of the district student population.

The Tubman school mirrors the multiethnic community that surrounds the school, and is also somewhat similar in its ethnic characteristics to the district student population. The most current Tubman student roster was used to determine the number of students attending the school from various ethnic groups. When compared to the 1995-96 Pupil Racial/Ethnic Census conducted by the district, Tubman students were found to be similar across several ethnic groups to students districtwide (See Figure IV.1). The most notable difference was found among African American students, who accounted for 34 percent of the Tubman student population, but were found much less frequently in other district schools.

Over half of the students at Tubman are overflow students from other parts of the district.

Based on data obtained from the district's Pupil Racial/Ethnic Census, we were able to establish the following percentages relating to the original attendance areas of Tubman students: those students who were bused to Tubman from the overflow schools' attendance zones ("overflow"); those who were from the surrounding Tubman attendance area ("neighborhood"); those who were from neither attendance area and had independently applied for admission ("choice"). As Figure IV.2 indicates, nearly 60 percent of the students now enrolled at Tubman Village Charter School are overflow students from other parts of the district. Most notably, the number of choice students has doubled from 1994-95 to 20 percent. Extra seats became available as some parents opted out of Tubman during the first year. Though the district assigned 30 of those seats in the second year to students coming from other attendance areas, in general the school is required to give preferences to

those students from the Tubman and overflow schools' attendance areas. In addition, the number of students from other areas is limited by a district formula.

Figure IV.1

Ethnic Characteristics of Tubman Students and Students Districtwide

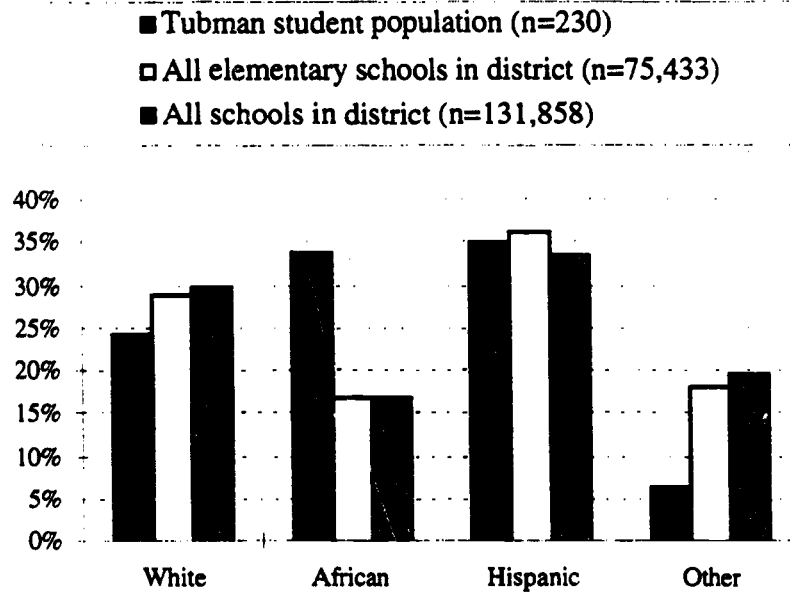
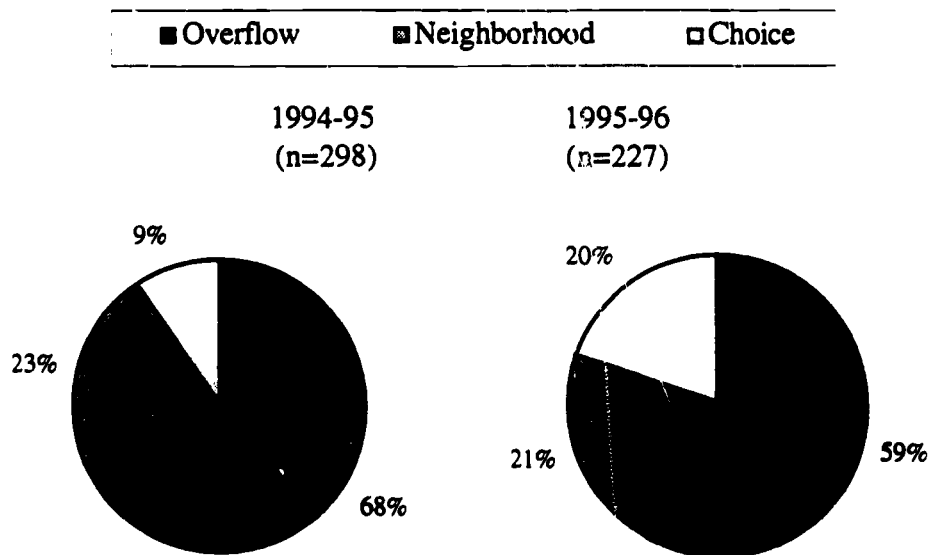


Figure IV.2

Original Attendance Areas of Tubman Students



Parents who entered the school because of "pull factors" expressed more satisfaction with it than those who entered it due to "push factors."

On the questionnaire, parents were asked to list the reasons why they decided to send their child to Tubman. Their responses fell into two categories, which were coded as either "pull factors" or "push factors." (See Appendix D for a complete list of responses.)

Pull factors are associated with positive attractions of the school. Of the 74 parents who responded to this question, 43 percent reported being "pulled" to Tubman because, among other things, they were seeking a Waldorf program, were impressed with the reputation of the Tubman school, were interested in the non-academic strengths of the school or wanted a smaller, better or "different" educational environment for their child. Some reasons parents gave for being "pulled" toward Tubman include:

- "I was very excited when I heard that a Waldorf method school was opening. When our neighborhood school was 'redistricted,' I was glad to sign up for this option."
- "The other school was crowded and did not seem to respond to diverse learning styles. I like Tubman's more creative way of teaching and variety of subjects and flexibility."
- "Dissatisfied with the approach of traditional elementary school education, wanted more of 'hands-on & eyes on' education. And an opportunity to be involved in a Charter School."

Push factors are associated with circumstances unrelated to the positive attractions of the school itself. Fifty seven percent of the parents indicated that they had not actively chosen Tubman for their child but, instead, enrolled their child at Tubman either because they felt it was their only option (due to misunderstandings of school boundary requirements or space limitations at other schools), because it was close to home or because they were dissatisfied with other neighborhood schools. Some reasons parents gave for being "pushed" toward Tubman include:

- "It was the district school. I wanted the neighborhood school."
- "Because of the zone this is the school that corresponds to her."
- "It's near our house."
- "It was the only one that had room."
- "Harriet Tubman was not my choice [sic] I want my son to go to Jefferson [sic] I was told that he was not in that District and that I must send him to Tubman."

We recorded a strong relationship between parents' perceptions of their freedom to choose the school and their level of satisfaction with the school (See Table IV.3). All but one of the parents who actively chose the Tubman School for their child were satisfied with the school. Conversely, nearly one third of the other parents, who for a variety of reasons expressed a "push" factor for sending their child to Tubman, indicated some dissatisfaction or uncertainty toward it.

Table IV.3

Relationship Between "Push" or "Pull" Reasons for Entering Tubman and Parents' Level of Satisfaction with the School

| | Reasons parents chose Tubman | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | "Pulled" into Tubman (n=31)* | "Pushed" into Tubman (n=41)* |
| Satisfied with Tubman? | | |
| Yes | 96.8 | 73.2 |
| No / Not sure | 3.2 | 26.8 |

P < .00

* Two parents who gave reasons for sending their child to Tubman did not rate their satisfaction.

Parent Support

From a detailed reading of the interviews with 15 parents (13 randomly selected and two recent members of the governance council), we have identified patterns that define three types of parents that vary according to their familiarity with the school's program and their support for Tubman. These groups can be described as follows:

1) supporters of the school who are familiar with the Tubman program; 2) supporters of the school who are somewhat familiar with the Tubman program; and 3) nonsupporters of the school who are not familiar with the Tubman program. The 15 parents interviewed were fairly evenly distributed among these groups, with slightly more parents found in the second group.

Supporters of the school who are familiar with the Tubman program

According to interviews, parents in this category have deliberately chosen to enroll their children in the Tubman school with full knowledge of the options, and they hold extremely favorable opinions about it. They are different than other parents who are less familiar with and less supportive of the Tubman school. All speak English, most were Caucasian, and most have some level of college education — including several with graduate courses. Furthermore, those with some college experience are most familiar with the school and most supportive of its program.

One aspect they most appreciate is the school's policy of "not pushing academics too early." As one parent said, "They need to be kids first, digging in the soil, dancing, doing drama, arts, etc." They also like the school's focus on "the heart and the hands," in addition to "the head," which they believe gives children time to grow and develop. Some of them described Tubman's atmosphere as "nurturing," "imaginative" and even "playful." Not surprisingly, these parents feel especially accepted and welcomed by the school. They are more likely to volunteer at school and feel, in the words of one parent, "like I am part of the school."

Supporters of the school who are somewhat familiar with the Tubman program

This group consists largely of parents with some level of high school education, whose children originally were assigned to Tubman as an "overflow school." These parents do not have as deep an understanding of the Waldorf approach but they have come to like the school and want to stay, even though they are aware that they have another option.

Many are pleased because they see that their child is happy with the school and their teachers. They also like other aspects of the school, including its friendly atmosphere, the individual attention given to students, the respect students receive from the teachers and staff, and the cultural diversity reflected in the student composition and festivals sponsored by the school. Interestingly, at least some of these parents are becoming more familiar with aspects of the Tubman philosophy. One positively cited "the mix of learning and playing, and the absence of pressure," which is characteristic of Waldorf education. Another indicated that while she had only heard of the Waldorf philosophy in the past, she wanted to learn more about it in the future.

Nonsupporters of the school who are not familiar with the Tubman program

This group includes primarily parents with no high school experience. Several were Spanish-speaking, and a few were Caucasians. Also introduced to the school because of the districts' busing policies, they do not understand or appreciate the Waldorf approach and are dissatisfied with at least some aspects of the school. Just as important, they do not seem to be aware that they could have chosen a different school, and it appears they are resigned to the situation.

In stark contrast to those more familiar with the program and who appreciated the school's "holistic" and nonacademic approach, this group has serious concerns about a school that "only teaches art" and "doesn't use books." One parent interviewed complained that her children were "not learning anything," and another was confused because children in some grades were "concentrating on sewing and gardening."

Yet, despite these misgivings, most parents in this group were satisfied with at least certain aspects of the school, including the level of communication between the school and student's families, and the individual attention given to their children. However, none of these parents understood the Waldorf approach to education, which may help explain their high degree of dissatisfaction with the Waldorf-like approaches.

Parent Satisfaction

The findings below are derived primarily from parent survey data, although when possible, corroborative interview data are also included.

Most parents say they are satisfied with the school, but a small core is not.

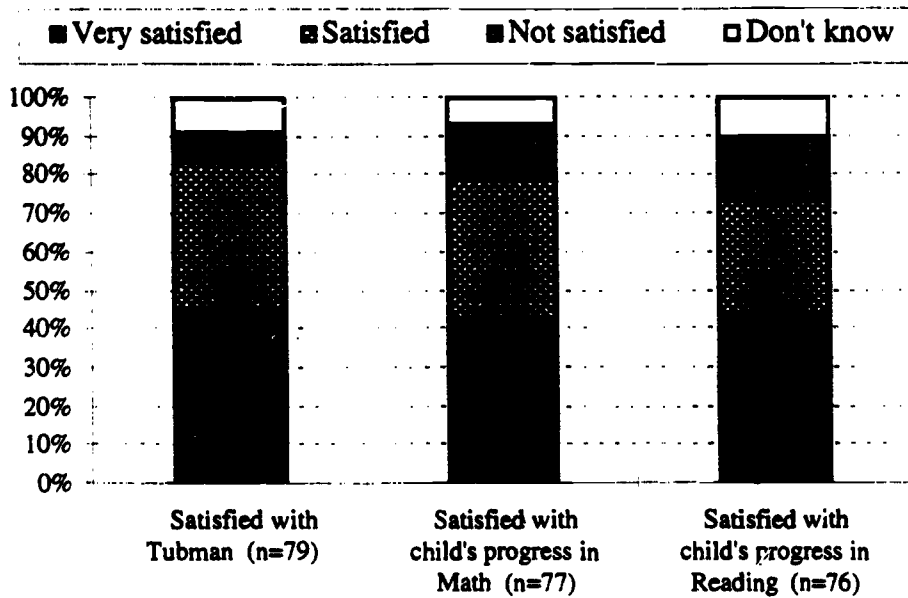
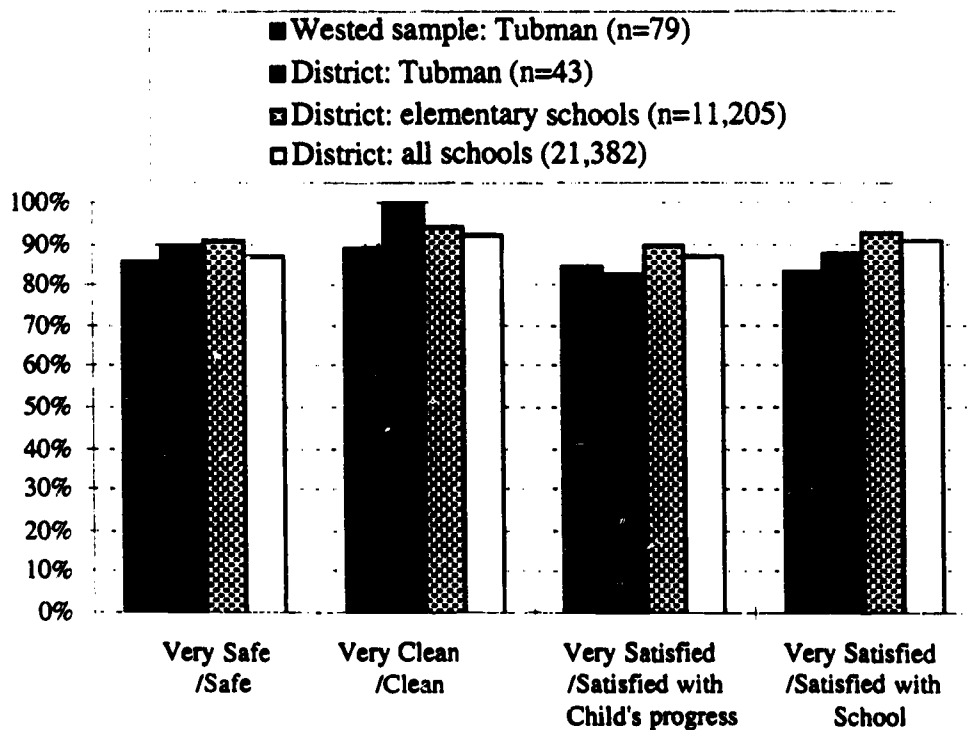
Most of the parents surveyed reported being satisfied with the Tubman charter school. Nearly half (46 percent) indicated being "very satisfied" and another 38 percent were "satisfied" (See Figure IV.3). In other words, over 80 percent of parents surveyed were either very satisfied or satisfied with the school. Similarly, 10 of the 15 parents who were interviewed on this topic expressed satisfaction with Tubman. One turned down a lucrative job offer from out of state so that her child could stay at Tubman, while another continued to drive her child to Tubman despite having recently moved out of the attendance area. The remaining parents — a little less than 20 percent of those surveyed and one third of the interviewees — expressed dissatisfaction or uncertainty about the school.

Most parents were satisfied with their child's academic progress, but there was a small core who were not.

Over three-quarters of the parents reported being satisfied with the academic progress of their child at Tubman. Seventy-nine percent said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's math progress, while 74 percent reported the same about their child's progress in reading (Figure IV.3). Conversely, up to one quarter of the survey respondents, and one third of the parents interviewed, were not satisfied or had yet to reach a decision regarding their child's progress.

Tubman parents expressed similar feelings toward their school as parents report districtwide.

Tubman parents were similar to other parents in the district in their assessment of their children's school. According to the 1995 Survey of Parent Satisfaction, conducted by the San Diego City Schools District, over 90 percent of elementary school parents were satisfied with their child's school and their overall progress, and believed the school to be a clean and safe environment (See Figure IV.4). This is just slightly more than the 85 percent of the Tubman parents who reported the same on WestEd's survey.

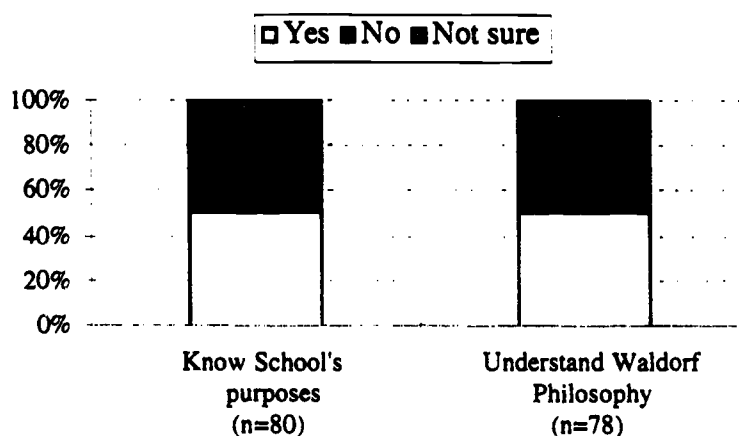
Figure IV.3*Parents' Level of Satisfaction with the Tubman School***Figure IV.4***Parents' Assessment of Their Child's School: Tubman Parents and Parents Districtwide*

Parents were split between those who did and those who did not understand the school's objectives and philosophy.

Just about half of the parents felt that they understood the purposes of the school and the Waldorf philosophy guiding Tubman (See Figure IV.5). Approximately 60 percent of the parents indicated that some efforts had been made in the past to explain the Waldorf philosophy to them. Over 60 percent of the parents also believed they knew what their child was supposed to be learning at Tubman.

Figure IV.5

Percentages of Parents Answering the Questionnaire Who Said They Know the School's Purposes and Understand its Philosophy



Parents were split between those who thought the school was giving high priority to academic skills and those who believed it stressed nonacademic skills.

Parents held different ideas about the types of things they think their children are learning. About 40 percent believed that academic skills are the primary focus of the school, whereas another 40 percent identified nonacademic skills, such as crafting and learning to interact properly with others as a primary focus. The remaining 20 percent thought academic and nonacademic skills were of equal importance at Tubman.

Correlates of Overall Satisfaction with the School

It has already been noted that parents were more satisfied with the school when they chose Tubman for their children because of positive reasons — that is, for reasons other than lack of an acceptable alternative or proximity. Their satisfaction also varies with their level of education and understanding of the Waldorf philosophy, as outlined below.

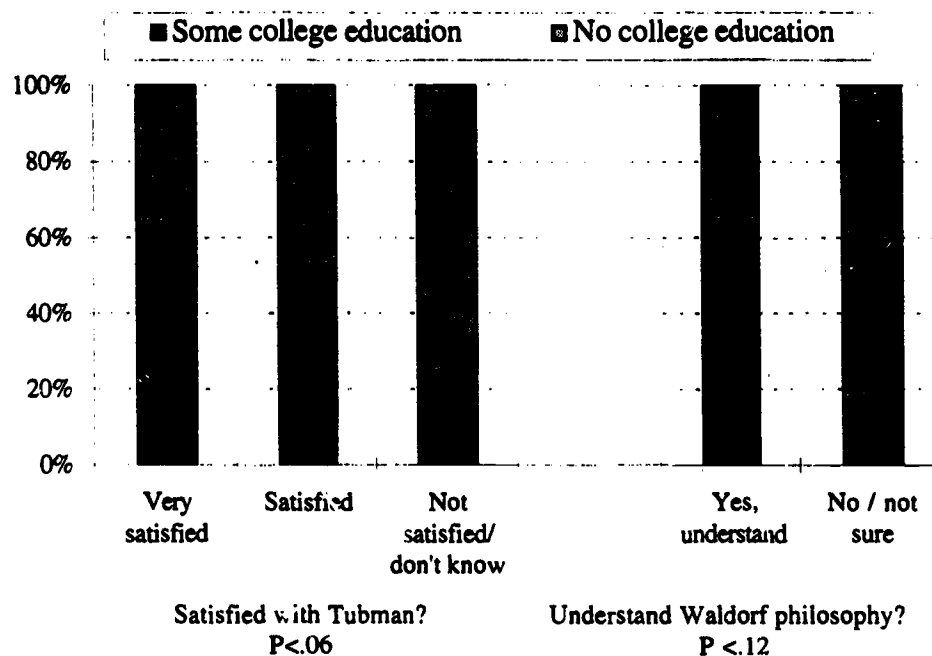
More than half the parents who are satisfied with the school also report some level of college education.

As shown in Figure IV.6, a majority (64 percent) of the parents who said they were very satisfied with the Tubman charter school reported some level of college education. Conversely, 75 percent of those who were not satisfied or unsure reported having no college experience. The same pattern was found for parents' education and satisfaction with their child's progress in reading. However, satisfaction with their child's progress in math was not related.

In interpreting this relationship between parent education and satisfaction, it is important to remember that our sample possibly overrepresents parents with more education, as explained in the Appendix C. Consequently, there may be more dissatisfaction with the school than reflected in our survey. Even so, the interview data, taken from a sample of parents stratified to reflect the total parent population at Tubman, substantiates the high level of parent satisfaction with at least some aspects of the Tubman school.

Parents who say they understood the school report a higher level of education than those who say they did not understand it.

Education also helps account for how well parents understand the school. Those who said they understand the Waldorf philosophy behind Tubman were more likely to report some college experience, compared to parents who did not understand the Waldorf approach (Figure IV.6). Among the parents who did not understand the Waldorf philosophy, 60 percent reported no college experience. Thus, education is associated with both understanding of the school program and level of satisfaction with it. This pattern is examined more closely next.

Figure IV.6*Parent's Reported Education Level and Satisfaction with the School*

Parents who understood the Waldorf philosophy are more likely to express satisfaction with the school.

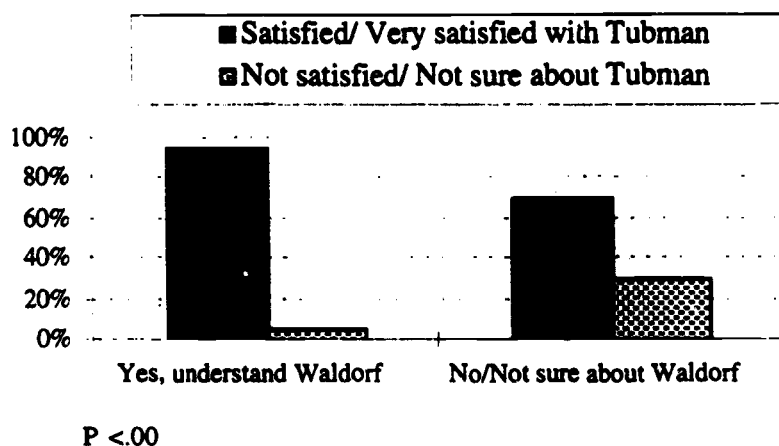
The most important predictor of school satisfaction is an understanding of the Waldorf approach to learning. As is shown in Figure IV.6, increased levels of education were associated with more familiarity with the program and more satisfaction with Tubman. However, an understanding of the program had the strongest correlation with parents who said they were satisfied with the school. The data indicate that those parents who are familiar with the program, regardless of education level, tend to like the program.

Nearly all (95 percent) of the parents who said that they were familiar with the Waldorf philosophy reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the Tubman charter school (Figure IV.7). While most (70 percent) of the remaining parents also reported being satisfied with Tubman, there remains approximately one third of these unfamiliar parents who are not satisfied with, or are uncertain about, the Tubman school.

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Figure IV.7

Parent's Understanding of the Waldorf Philosophy and Level of Satisfaction with the School



Parent Involvement and Communication

The survey included a number of questions about the level of parent involvement in the school and how frequently the school communicates with them.

Both parents and teachers indicated that the school interacted frequently with most parents.

Many of the parents interviewed, as well as most of those surveyed, stressed the frequent attempts by Tubman staff to communicate with them. Most (86 percent) of the parents said that they had visited their child's classroom, and nearly all indicated that they had attended at least one parent conference (91 percent) and had been invited to attend others (99 percent). Over 80 percent of the parents also said that their child's teacher occasionally or frequently assigns homework that requires or encourages parent participation, and even more (89 percent) reported that they have occasionally or frequently received information from teachers regarding their child's progress at school. There are some parents, however (17 percent), who insist that there is very little communication regarding school assignments and lessons between themselves and the teachers at Tubman.

Much of the information provided by teachers also points to a high degree of communication between Tubman staff and parents. A weekly bulletin is produced for all parents and other forms of communication are employed as well. All of the teachers report having meetings with most parents during the school year, and they also frequently send home notes to parents and communicate by telephone as well.

Parents are involved in a variety of ways at the school, although participation is moderate to minimal.

In interviews, teachers at Tubman reported that parents regularly become involved in the school in a variety of different ways. Parents have attended daytime "theme meals," helped organize or assisted with field trips and other social activities, and even became involved in classroom instruction, according to teachers. However, as varied as these parent roles are at Tubman, parents report that their participation in them is moderate to minimal. Up to 43 percent of the parents indicated that they had been a part of a club or other social activity at Tubman, but one third had attended parent workshops or classes (36 percent), attended governance council meetings (30 percent), or helped or taught in the classroom (25 percent).

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tubman's case is an important one, one that helps those involved in the charter school movement better understand the complexities involved in starting a new charter school. As with any new effort that takes risks to achieve higher ends, mistakes must be accepted as inevitable. Nonetheless, most would agree that mistakes that may adversely affect children's academic success and well-being should be avoided when possible. Therefore, it is imperative that the issues this report raises are addressed candidly and expeditiously to avoid or minimize any negative impacts on the students at Tubman.

The charter school movement, in its initial stages, has experienced many challenges typically associated with being part of a larger social movement—a movement advocating a very different model of public education. These challenges have been exacerbated by some more particular issues, such as operating under a law that is vague, even inconsistent. As a result, there are still very few clear-cut answers to guide some of the most challenging issues charter schools and their districts face.

As our study team learned, just as charter schools themselves are pioneers, so too are the sponsoring agencies that are trying to monitor and support them. The recommendations suggest options for the Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village and the San Diego City Schools district. In so doing, it also offers insights into some of the more general issues concerning the relationship between California charter schools and their sponsors. While many of the critical issues confronted by Tubman are specific to its situation and context, others are more directly linked to the fundamental way in which charter schools are initiated and overseen by their districts. The following conclusions and recommendations are organized according to those critical issue areas, which are:

- 1) Autonomy and Accountability
- 2) Educational Program
- 3) Governance
- 4) Informed Parental Choice
- 5) Charter School Evaluations

Within each focus area, when relevant, discussion is initiated concerning the issues faced by both the school site and the district. Each section then concludes with a list of recommendations specific to Tubman and to San Diego City Schools. Much of the analysis, of course, inevitably focuses on the interrelationship between the charter school and those in the district who are ultimately charged with final oversight of the charter. The crossroads where the school and the district meet should be kept in mind as the conclusions and recommendations are outlined below.

Autonomy and Accountability

Years of related research on site-based governance show that granting schools more autonomy will not, in itself, yield the improved learning results hoped for unless certain conditions are in place.¹⁸ In particular, research has found that the skills and experience necessary to effectively manage a school are essential for those charged with making administrative and policy decisions at the school. Moreover, the degree to which these school leaders are free to make these decisions, as well as the degree to which the school district must oversee such decisions, needs to be clearly defined. The Tubman case illustrates the potential pitfalls involved when these lines of authority and responsibility between groups and individuals are not strictly drawn. The experiences of those involved at both the school level and the district level offer a roadmap for better managing such decisions in the future.

The lines of authority and liability between charter schools and the district are ambiguous.

According to the way the charter school law is structured in California, each charter school is required to negotiate its relationship — i.e., the degree of autonomy it is allowed — with its sponsor. As a result, charter schools in this state relate to their districts along a broad continuum of independence and dependence.¹⁹ Likewise, districts are approaching their responsibilities for monitoring and supporting charter schools in radically different ways. Some may provide a considerable amount of administrative support, whereas others may take a more hands-off approach, at least until problems occur.

The difficulty lies in the fact that the state's charter law is ambiguous, if not contradictory, about the degree to which charter schools are independent entities. Consider these provisions:

- Charter schools are supposed to operate independently of the district's structure,²⁰ while simultaneously depending upon that same district structure for approval, renewal and/or revocation.²¹ This arrangement appears to be a contradiction, and the law's provisions for renewing or revoking a charter give little guidance about how a sponsoring agency is to monitor legal compliance with any of the provisions.²²
- The legislation releases charter schools from most state laws governing school districts,²³ and for funding purposes at least, they are considered to be independent school districts.²⁴ Yet as sponsoring agencies, districts are not prohibited from applying their own requirements to charter schools as conditions for approving them; thus, districts can reapply many of the policies to charter schools.

According to the legislation, then, charter schools are thrust into an uncertain position. How do they exercise their freedom in unique ways when districts maintain oversight responsibility? Districts, too, are in an enigmatic position. They must demand results, even shut schools down when evidence shows they fail to meet expectations or when they commit wrongdoing. At the same time, they must balance the natural tendency to respond to mistakes or conflicts with blanket policies and avoid concluding prematurely that a school has succeeded or failed or basing such decisions exclusively on traditional public school norms and procedures. Thus, one of the universal challenges facing districts is how best to move from "rule-based to performance-based accountability systems,"²⁵ as the charter law advocates.

Given the lack of clarity in the law, especially with regard to liability issues, some districts have necessarily turned to creating additional criteria and guidelines for the approval of charter schools. Yet, creating a layer of prescriptive policies at the district level to better direct charter schools is inconsistent with the deregulatory aspect of the charter concept. Furthermore, the legislation is unclear as to whether districts have the legal authority to apply their own policies to schools, and whether charter schools are, ultimately, obligated to abide by them. Thus, as we discuss further on, the approval process becomes a pivotal point in the life of a charter school and the role of the district in overseeing that school.

Some pending legislation seeks to clarify the liability question. Recognizing that districts are legitimately concerned about how decisions that are out of their hands may "come back to haunt them," the Little Hoover Commission recently recommended:

*The Governor and the Legislature should amend the charter law to give charter schools status as separate legal governmental entities with full liability for their actions and full ability to participate in state programs available to districts. Sponsoring districts should be released from liability for action taken by charter schools.*²⁶

The Commission's recommendations would, thereby, convert the relationship between the district and Tubman (and other charter schools in the district) to a contractual one, based on the school's petition, with the district serving as a subcontractor to the school for certain services (such as payroll or facilities maintenance). Others argue, however, that even if a provision regarding liability were added to the law, the district's liability for charter school actions may not be clarified until cases are tried in courts.

The former director of Tubman believed that the district's concern about its own responsibility and liability for the actions of charter schools led to encroachments on the school's philosophical orientation, constraining and compromising its innovative curricular and instructional approaches. Some staff at the school expressed, however, a belief that they gained experience and knowledge from working with some of the district

administrators and felt there was a real benefit to blending Waldorf approaches with public school approaches. One experienced Waldorf teacher interviewed also added that using public school guidelines was something she did on a regular basis even when working in private schools. Founders of the school stated that on hindsight they would have used the district more. They found that district personnel were valuable resources, who were generally very committed, creative and flexible.

In light of the ambiguity about liability and authority across the state, it is not surprising that this school experienced several obstacles and censures in exercising its autonomy. But both the district and the school must now answer questions arising throughout states with charter legislation in place, such as: How much independence should charter schools have, given that they are publicly funded? What is the district's responsibility for monitoring charter schools and correcting problems as the district defines them? What role does the school play in the monitoring process?

The review and approval process did not produce a charter that is clearly consistent with the legislation or the district's requirements.

Though the charter school legislation suggests that accountability parameters are to be outlined in each charter proposal, many districts are currently struggling with the difficulty of actually holding charter schools to the outcomes or measures listed in those petitions, especially when, as in the case of Tubman, the charter language is somewhat vague. The Tubman charter was written primarily by one individual, without broad community participation. In addition, the charter provided some guidance about the curriculum, but many features critical to starting and running a school were ignored. A few of the people who work at the school now believe the charter is obsolete and others tend to adapt the terms of the charter to the context of their individual classrooms.

In addition, some key provisions of the legislation and the district's guidelines were not addressed in the charter petition. For example, it does not describe the method to be used to measure the school's progress toward any outcomes. Moreover, in an effort to give charter schools discretion, several provisions of the district's guidelines were stated in the form of questions for petitioners to respond to (recent modification of the guidelines has corrected this problem), but without clearly specifying the attributes of acceptable responses. Furthermore, while some sections of the guidelines do provide some clear clues as to what the district was looking for, these clues are not explicitly linked to the approval criteria, which complicates the matter further. A more detailed analysis of the discrepancies between the petition, the law and the district guidelines appears in the "Educational Program" section of this part.

Although the superintendent recommended against approving this school, and there was also an initial lack of consensus among board members, the board approved the petition in an act of support for charter schools. Despite the ambiguities and

inconsistencies in the way the charter was written as it relates to the charter law and district guidelines, there were no changes made to ensure that the school's progress could be tracked. For example, from a monitoring perspective, the document was not uniformly specific about its objectives and how they could be measured. Nor did it contain milestones or time frames for when certain events would occur. Furthermore, the fact that the charter was approved despite its lack of clarity in key areas has also made it difficult to evaluate its progress post hoc.

The question of what role the charter document should play is closely tied to the preceding issue about the relationship between the district and a given charter school. Districts have a great deal of responsibility in their approval authority to examine a charter proposal carefully for the 13 items in the charter school law, including accountability measures. For example, to the extent that a charter has negotiated a semi-autonomous relationship with the district, the charter could be considered a contract, requiring an official procedure between the district and school for modifications each time the scope of work changes. On the other hand, to the extent that a charter is more like a site-based managed school, the charter could be viewed more as a "living document" that the school can revise periodically. In either case, charters and districts must be vigilant during the review and approval process, in the specificity and clarity of the school's stated goals, outcomes and measures. Otherwise it becomes difficult to use the document for either planning or accountability purposes later on.

Recommendations for Autonomy and Accountability Issues

- 1) The district, charter school stakeholders and members of the community should conduct a series of roundtable discussions to reexamine the assumptions underlying relationships between the district and charter schools. Within those relationships, the charter petition plays a pivotal role. As a starting point, these discussions might consider the following range of options:
 - At one end, charters could be legally designated as independent, liable entities (assuming this is clarified through pending legislative proposals or court cases), which would mean that the district could conceivably be hired by the school to provide certain services, such as payroll and school maintenance, etc.
 - Conversely, charters could be viewed as subcontractors to the district, *almost* independent of the district (analogous to hiring an outside not-for-profit or for-profit organization to run a school). If problems occur, the district then has a very clearly stated document from which it can argue violations. However, negotiating such contracts would require charter

schools to have skilled administrators or the funds to hire people with the requisite legal skills to negotiate such contracts in the beginning.

- At the other end, charter schools could be treated like any other site-based management arrangement. The district's role would be to ensure they have adequate training, up front, on governance, fiscal and legal liability issues. In this case, the charter petition would be viewed more as a general plan or a living document that changes over time.
- 2) Once some agreement has been reached regarding the role of the charter proposal, Board members, staff from the district and various members from the community (including parents and students from the school) should convene to clarify terms within the petition and to ensure that the document is compatible with the school's own *current* operational procedures and goals.
 - 3) The district should develop and make available a handbook providing suggestions about how to write a charter, including examples of clearly written statements outlining a school's goals, measurable objectives, self-assessment and other evaluation processes. This development could be done in collaboration with members of the charter school community within the district and state, or by drawing on benchmarks from other charters.
 - 4) The district and charter school should expand and partner with others in the community (e.g., universities and businesses) to provide technical assistance to those writing charter proposals.

Educational Program

Tubman's staff has exhibited considerable flexibility in its second year of operation as it has come to understand more fully the reality of adapting a small private school model to the setting of an urban public school with a diverse student population. The school district is similarly working through the challenges of how best to communicate the program to the public and find ways to provide support for the educational program at the school. The following conclusions and recommendations address the need to clarify both what the school is intended to be and what it is likely to become and to identify the actions that will support the school in its evolution.

The charter petition inadequately describes the school's proposed educational program.

According to our content analysis, the charter petition describes the educational program in terms of its purposes, its grade-by-grade topics of instruction and categories of content, and, indirectly, its student outcomes as described in the "Assessment and

Accountability" section of the petition. It meets some requirements of the law and district guidelines that relate to the educational program, but omits others. The petition responds to the law and the guidelines by providing the following:

- A statement of educational goals,
- A program goal including the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners,
- A statement that the charter school will be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations,
- A statement that it will provide multicultural education,
- A list of student outcomes, some of which are measurable,
- A list of means by which students will demonstrate their learning but without an explanation of how those demonstrations will be measured,
- A process for reporting student progress to parents, and
- A description of who it is the school is attempting to educate.

The petition does not fully or directly respond to the law and/or guidelines in the following areas:

- A description of what it means to be an "educated person" in the 21st century,
- An explanation of how learning best occurs,
- A description of the method by which pupil progress in meeting pupil outcomes will be measured,
- A description of the different and innovative teaching methods the school will encourage (The petition does contain this assertion, "The teaching methods of the Waldorf philosophy are very innovative and are specified in the section of the charter on curriculum. . ."; but the teaching methods are neither identified nor described anywhere in the petition.)
- A plan for implementing the California curriculum frameworks,
- A plan for the provision of texts, instructional supplies, and equipment (The petition does state, "The curriculum does not provide for specific textbooks and

workbooks. The school will procure the reading materials needed on a specific needs basis, as the curriculum designates." This statement is not a plan.),

- A description of the organization of the instructional program (The petition uses terms that may be related to instructional program organization, but it does not define the terms or otherwise explain them either explicitly or implicitly. The terms are "main lesson," "learning block," and "curriculum block." The petition also refers to a "developmental model created by Rudolph Steiner . . . [which] asserts that children have very identifiable stages of development and that their education must be appropriate to the specific stages of development." The petition does not, however, explain this model.), and
- A description of the special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low achieving.

The educational program as it is presented in the petition is only part of what the law and the district guidelines require. The omission of a description of the Waldorf teaching methodology and of the developmental model which is the foundation of its approach impairs the document's usefulness to an audience not already knowledgeable about the Waldorf program.

Teachers express some of the concepts and teach some of the content that the petition describes.

The research team found numerous instances of the teaching of literature, art, music, and drama, all of which are emphasized in the petition. There were also examples of memorization of times tables and of mental arithmetic, which match the content of the curriculum described in the petition. Teachers also expressed concepts, such as balancing "hearts, heads and hands," which is found in the petition. However, as said before, no in depth data collection or observation was conducted to determine the degree to which teaching is consistent with the petition.

Standardized tests are driving significant adaptations in the educational program.

There was, during the first year of operation, a tendency by the staff to underestimate how seriously standardized test scores are taken in public school systems. Observations earlier in this report about significant events in the development of the school include an account of an administrator walking the staff through their ASAT test results and finding them below the results in other comparable schools. This became a seminal event in the faculty's efforts to modify the curriculum and to broaden interest in using district-adopted textbooks and other instructional materials, particularly in the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Some teachers confided that they are being challenged about how to merge conventional information included on standardized tests with Waldorf priorities and what the teachers think is important to teach. As the findings indicate, a critical tension in the program — a tension confronted by many other charter schools — arises from an apparent contradiction between operating a non-conventional alternative school and conforming to district requirements. The district is looking for achievement data even though the information on the tests may be a very limited measure of what the school is trying to do.

Recommendations for Educational Program Issues

1. The school should rewrite the charter petition to accomplish the following purposes:
 - describing the measurement procedures used to assess pupil progress on an annual basis,
 - providing a clear description of the teaching methods used in Waldorf education,
 - providing a clear description of the educational program, including elements of Waldorf education that will and will not be retained, and aspects of the district's curriculum approaches and materials that will be adopted.
2. The school and district should have further discussions about the school's accountability for results on the district administered standardized tests (ASAT). (The proposed revisions of the guidelines for the Implementation of the Charter Schools Act of 1992, dated January 16, 1996, address this issue in part.)

Governance

An effective governance structure makes up the foundation of charter schools; they are likely to falter without one. School administrators and teachers are given freedom to experiment on the assumption that they will create well-functioning, accountable governance bodies that include parents and provides firm guidance. The needed guidelines for assuring that charter schools will be effectively governed and monitored could come from a number of sources, including legislation, oversight groups and agencies, civic groups and private, public or independent school associations.

When governance councils run into trouble, as was the case at Tubman, they often do not feel they have an outside support group to which they can turn, confidentially, for help without the risk of negative publicity. The end result can be poor decisionmaking

which may or may not be revealed until the situation becomes much worse. Some conditions that may account for problems with the school's governance structure follow.

The Tubman Governance Council has been partially inhibited because its authority is not clearly delineated.

As mentioned in the earlier discussion of autonomy and accountability, clear division of responsibilities among governing bodies is an essential component of site-based governance efforts. Equally important is the clear delineation of responsibilities and authority at the school level, between the school's director and the governance council. The role of the Tubman governance council was not sufficiently defined, either in the petition or in practice during most of the two years of its operation, during which it has been the subject of embittered controversy. In particular, the council's authority to hire, evaluate and dismiss teaching personnel had been continually challenged by the former director, who claimed sole responsibility for personnel. Council members also had doubts about their authority to fire the director. This stalemate worsened because of the council's readiness to accept a hands-off policy toward overseeing teaching and instruction, despite the fact that these parts of the school program have been subject to widespread public criticism.

Governance council members have had to grapple with serious and complex issues, often without an experienced leader.

Tubman has been plagued by several types of administrative issues that remain unresolved. These types of administrative challenges are common for many charter schools, especially start-up charter schools.²⁷ Starting a new school, especially one located in a large urban school district, requires well developed skills. It is a challenging task even for the most experienced school administrator. Interviews with those within and outside the school largely attributed these problems to the fact that the director lacked administrative experience in large public school districts. In addition to his lack of administrative experience, the director was operating under a compressed timeline and some — including himself — felt he had insufficient time to deal with administrative responsibilities. Many at the school reported that they were fortunate to obtain the services of a retired district principle during this time.

Members of Tubman's governance council also had minimal experience with the demanding responsibilities required of them, and they were already busy people serving part-time. Yet, for most of their existence, they have confronted and struggled with controversial and complex challenges — a few of them, serious improprieties — without a clear sense of the best legal or administrative course of action to take. As the site-based governance literature underscores, the shortage of council members with the requisite financial and administrative skills, combined with the lack of an experienced leader, are two common pitfalls schools face when trying to govern themselves.²⁸

The charter school legislation in California, by not including start-up funds to provide support and training to those starting up a school, seems not to acknowledge the skills and resources such a task requires — an undertaking that has often been described as being more difficult than starting a new business.²⁹

Recommendations for Improved Governance

- 1) Given the unique circumstances of this case, the district should offer to assist the school in hiring an administrator with suitable administrative experience and/or continue to provide administrative assistance to the school.
- 2) The district should help the school rewrite the governance council by-laws to clarify their spheres of authority, especially with regard to personnel and budget matters. The council's authority to review and hire and fire teaching personnel and its authority to hire and fire the school administrator should be clearly spelled out.
- 3) The school should retain outside consultants or use district resources to help train and advise council members regarding their responsibilities and help them hone their financial and legal decisionmaking skills and abilities.
- 4) The school should aggressively inform parents about opportunities to serve on the governance council and hold elections at convenient locations and times.
- 5) The school should review legal questions about the openness of all of its council sessions; publicize the times, agendas and minutes of all open meetings in the school newsletter; rotate meeting locations; and offer to arrange transportation for parents who need it.

Informed Parental Choice

The spirit of the movement dictates, and the legislation stipulates, that "no governing board of a school district shall *require* any pupil enrolled in the school district to attend a charter school" [emphasis added]. Charter schools and other choice programs count on parents being adequately informed about the choices available to them. This year, the district clearly provides parents at the Tubman charter school with a choice of schools on that site. It is therefore disconcerting that some parents still seem to be confused about whether they have real alternatives to sending their children to the Waldorf school.

Parents surveyed by WestEd were asked to list reasons they chose the Tubman charter school. Their responses indicate that almost one third of the parents (24 of the 74 who responded) believe they had little or no choice about sending their children to the charter school. Part of this analysis is admittedly based on judgments about what was

being communicated in very brief comments in surveys, but some of the responses unequivocally demonstrate that some parents remained convinced that they had no viable choice. Although it may be impossible to eliminate these perceptions entirely, the persistence of these convictions seriously jeopardizes the principles of parental choice, which is fundamental to the charter school concept.

The principles of choice may be compromised if parents are not fully knowledgeable about the nature of Tubman's program and their other options.

Interviews revealed that support for the school varies from an enthusiastic and familiar endorsement to passive acceptance and resentful dissatisfaction, but the vast majority of parents surveyed are positive toward the school. The contingent of parents with some level of college education, who constitute over half of those who returned questionnaires, tend to be "very satisfied" with the school. In particular, according to our interviews, some parents who are working in the field of education and/or have substantial college backgrounds, are very familiar with the Waldorf philosophy and program and also are "very satisfied."

On the other hand, survey and interview data suggest that those parents who reported less formal education tended not to understand or were uncertain about the purpose and philosophy of the school's program, even though in some cases the parents indicated that efforts had been made to explain the program. While only a few parents did not support the program, their criticisms were aimed at some basic elements in the Waldorf approach, such as the emphasis on gardening and knitting.

Because the school's approach is unique and may not fit all children, it would seem that parents who are considering this school need to be especially well-informed before they can make knowledgeable choices. This school, of course, is not unique in the parental and public misconception or lack of clarity about its educational goals. However, Waldorf education is sufficiently unorthodox, and the philosophy sufficiently complex, that the level of parent understanding may be an especially salient concern in the case of the Tubman school.

As discussed before, Waldorf education is based on a complex philosophy, which may pose challenges to communicating its principles to parents and the community. Imparting Tubman's educational program to parents is further complicated by the largely undocumented modifications and adaptations being made in the way Waldorf principles are being applied in this school. For example, how best can the school convey to parents the difference between a "Waldorf-inspired" and a traditional Waldorf school?

In addition to the difficulty of communicating a unique program to a diverse body of parents, the principles of informed choice can be compromised when parents believe they are *required* to enroll their child. Thus, while in theory dissatisfied parents can

simply withdraw their children, in practice this may not occur for several reasons, including non-programmatic ones: the friendships their children have formed, the difficulty of transferring to a school with a different curricular emphasis or timeline, or problems making new transportation or baby-sitting arrangements.

At Tubman, the research team found that parents' reasons for enrolling their children at Tubman were often for some of the above non-programmatic reasons. Survey data showed that approximately one-fourth of the parents surveyed felt they had no other choice but to enroll their children at Tubman, and others enrolled their children simply for pragmatic reasons, such as proximity (19 percent). These parents who enrolled their children for what we characterize as "push factors" (those that are not related to the positive factors of the school) were more likely to be dissatisfied with the school; however, it is important to note again that most parents were satisfied with the school.

Recommendations for Ensuring Informed Parental Choice

- 1) The district and the school should jointly undertake a series of parent and community education and knowledge-building activities to ensure that parents understand the Tubman program, its distinctions from a regular school program and their other options. While the school has attempted to provide some of this information, a more intensive set of activities may be necessary, such as one-on-one sessions with targeted parents, to ensure that they have complete information to make genuine choices.
- 2) The school should especially target such activities to parents who are relatively unfamiliar with Waldorf-type approaches and who are dissatisfied with the school. The correlation between knowledge of Waldorf principles and satisfaction with the school suggests that it is particularly important to find more effective ways to reach this group of parents.
- 3) Materials distributed should be translated into languages represented in the school. A parent conjectured that a major reason many parents thought they had no option other than the Tubman charter school is that they had trouble understanding the printed notices distributed before the school opened. This was particularly true of the non-English speakers. Neighborhood forums and translations would likely remedy some of those problems.
- 4) The district should study the feasibility of removing Tubman from the busing overflow program. Some parents do not seem to understand or accept criteria used to assign students to overflow status. With the prospect that optional sites may have little room, the district's decision to keep this charter school in its overflow program seriously compounds the problem of communicating to parents their real options.

Charter School Evaluations

The charter school law stipulates that sponsoring agencies may renew charters for five-year periods. It further states that a charter may be revoked for failing to meet conditions of the petition process, failing to meet or pursue the promised pupil outcomes, failing to meet generally accepted accounting standards, or violating the law. However, the law does not provide guidance about *when* or *how* sponsors should monitor charter schools, nor how soon it is reasonable to expect stated outcomes. Moreover, as discussed earlier, while the legislation seems to stipulate that districts should be monitoring charter schools, in so far as they are responsible for deciding whether or not to renew their charters, it does not provide guidelines for reconciling the monitoring function with a charter school's independence from the district structure.

WestEd's preliminary survey of plans by other California school districts to provide oversight of charter schools they are sponsoring suggests most districts have not yet confronted the oversight problem as forthrightly as SDCS. As a front-runner, the district has shouldered the responsibility of pursuing a monitoring process without the guidance of previous experience.

WestEd considers the current study part of an ongoing developmental process from which other charter schools and their sponsoring agencies will likely learn valuable lessons. In designing this study, the goals were to conduct a comprehensive review to meet some of the district's monitoring information needs while at the same time providing selected program improvement information to support the school. The research team has developed some instruments and tested some processes that can be adapted for purposes of studying other charter schools in the district over time. In addition, however, there are several existing instruments developed for other school program review processes (e.g., WASC [Western Association of Schools and Colleges] Review, SB1274 Protocol, the state department's Program Quality Review) that should also be considered for adaptation for charter schools

Districts and charter schools need to look at multiple indicators of success and pursue a variety of method for collecting information about the progress of their students and their program as a whole. Some review methods can be self-initiated by the *school*. Others can be initiated by the *sponsoring agency*. Either type can be conducted *internally* or by an *external agent* or some *combination* of both. Moreover, any of these approaches to program review can focus on, or include, different purposes, ranging from *periodic audits* and *compliance monitoring* to *continuous self-improvement studies*. A viable review and evaluation program would consist of a portfolio of all of these approaches.

Recommendations for Future Evaluations

- 1) The district should conduct or commission compliance audits of all its charter schools on a regular basis (annually or every few years) to satisfy its statutory responsibility to ensure that provisions of the charter and relevant laws are being met.
- 2) The school should commission program improvement studies (annually or every few years) with the primary objectives of receiving feedback about its progress toward meeting goals outlined in their petition and of helping them to set a program improvement course. In addition, the school should design a self-evaluation process to determine accomplishments on an annual basis.
- 3) These audits and studies should begin during the first year of operation, and results should be used to provide the school with timely feedback on what is consistent with its plan and what is not.
- 4) In addition to standardized outcome data now collected districtwide (e.g., test and parent satisfaction survey data), schools and the district should decide upon a set of indicators to guide the collection of data on a regular basis.
- 5) The district should provide assistance for charter schools, or broker assistance with an outside agency, when reviews identify technical legal problems or potential problem areas.
- 6) The district, in conjunction with existing charter schools in the district, should carefully review state legislative requirements, district guidelines and the goals in each school's petition and collectively establish districtwide, common indicators that all charter schools will agree to report, which can be used as baseline data to be collected over time. Also, if individual charter petitions do not delineate flexible indicators specific to each school, these should be negotiated and included in the document.
- 7) The district should establish appropriate milestones for making critical decisions, and withhold judgment on many provisions until after the third year of implementation, provided the school seems to be making progress and/or is striving to make necessary mid-course corrections.

¹ In California, one charter school currently in operation in Twin Ridges bases its educational program on Waldorf principles. Two other schools based on the Waldorf education program are not yet in operation: one is a charter school in Novato and the other is a federally funded public school in Oakridge, near Sacramento.

² Anthroposophy is a spiritualist philosophy founded by Rudolph Steiner and promulgated by 19th-century European scholars. A further discussion of Anthroposophy and the controversy around it is discussed in an endnote in the Background and Context section.

³ Carlos, Lisa. (1993, February). *The Privatization of Choice* (Policy Update No. Three). San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (WestEd).

Carlos, Lisa, & Amsler, Mary. (1993, December). *Site-based Management: An Experiment in Governance* (Policy Brief No. 20). San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (WestEd).

Carlos, Lisa, & Izu, JoAnn. (1993, December). *Deregulating Categorical Programs: Will it Work?* (Policy Brief No. 21). San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (WestEd).

⁴ Little Hoover Commission. (1996). *The Charter Movement Education Reform School By School*. Sacramento, CA: State of California.

⁵ The Charter Schools Act of 1992 took effect on January 1, 1993. The following charter schools have been approved by the San Diego City Schools Board: The Charter School of San Diego (approved July 13, 1993); Darnell E. Campus (approved October 13, 1993); The Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village (approved November 2, 1993); O'Farrell Community School (approved January 4, 1994); The Museum School (approved February 7, 1995; scheduled to open September); The Johnson/Urban League Charter School (approved February 21, 1995); School of Success Kindergarten Academy (approved September 12, 1995); and Memorial Academy for International Baccalaureate Preparation (approved September 19, 1995).

⁶ Bierlein, Louann A., & Mullholland, Lori A. (1994). *Comparing Charter School Laws: The Issue of Autonomy*. Tempe, AZ: Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

Millot, Marc D. (1995). *What Are Charter Schools? An Introduction to the Concept and the Statutes*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

⁷ Corwin, Ronald G., & Flaherty, John F. (1995). *Freedom and Innovation in California's Charter Schools*. Los Alamitos, CA: WestEd. In this survey study of California charter schools, the researchers found a much higher frequency of innovative approaches in charter schools, such as: the use of technology for learning; site-based governance; increased parent participation efforts; alternative assessments, etc.

Finn, Chester E., Jr.; Bierlein, Louann A., & Manno, Bruno, V. (1996). *Charter Schools in Action: A First Look*. Washington, DC: Hudson Institute.

⁸ Finn, C. E., Jr., Bierlein, L. A., & Manno, B. V. (1996, January).

⁹ Education Code 47605

¹⁰ Education Code 47601

¹¹ Waldorf Charter School of San Diego (1995, April 20), p. 3.

¹²Corwin, R. G., & Flaherty, J. F. (1996).

¹³Dianda, M. R., & Corwin, R. G. (1994). *Vision and Reality: A First Year Look at California's Charter Schools*. Los Alamitos, CA: Southwest Regional Laboratory (WestEd).

¹⁴ This decision was made against the advice of district staff who pointed out that the creation of a combination charter/overflow school would result in a "captured audience" of students for the charter program; students who are designated to move from an overcrowded school to an overflow school are, in effect, mandated to do so. Staff interpreted this mandate as a possible violation of the charter legislation, which states that students may not be compelled to attend a charter school. They made this interpretation despite the availability of an alternative to Tubman because they assumed that some parents might not have sufficient knowledge to realize the program implications of having their children attend the Charter School at Harriet Tubman Village.

See: San Diego City Schools, Planning, Assessment, and Accountability Division. (1995, July 25). *Staff Recommendations Regarding Waldorf Charter School of San Diego (Harriet Tubman Village School) for 1995-96*.

¹⁵ According to *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Anthroposophy is defined as "a 20th century religious system growing out of theosophy and centering on man rather than God." Waldorf educators make a distinction, however, between "religion" and the "spiritual." The federal government apparently accepts that distinction, as the U.S. Department of Education recently awarded \$230,000 to fund a Waldorf public elementary school in Sacramento (Oakridge) for three years. However, the San Diego City School's general counsel's office issued a 12-page memo (7/6/95) warning that Anthroposophy was considered by their office to be a religion.

Our study team has also tracked some highly contentious conversations over the Internet about the validity of the Waldorf education and its appropriateness for public schools. We noted that critics seem most concerned about items such as the following:

- Timetables for learning reading and science in Waldorf schools are often considered relatively slow, and indeed, in radical opposition to the California State Framework Guidelines. This has raised questions about when Waldorf children can be expected to catch up with other children.
- Bible stories and Greek and Norse myths are sometimes presented as true stories and critics are concerned how these items are used and taught.
- Some Waldorf teacher training materials say that human culture has evolved in two 160-year epochs, raising questions about whether the curriculum is based on theosophical doctrine rather than historical scholarship.
- Waldorf-trained teachers often study the works of Rudolph Steiner, which reportedly contain statements sympathetic to racism associated with Germany in the 1920s.

More recently, an article from the April 1996 issue of *Church and State*, raises many issues around the use of the Waldorf philosophy in publicly-funded schools. See: Boston, R. (1996, April). Charter for Indoctrination? *Church and State*, pp. 4-7.

¹⁶ One of the teachers was particularly concerned about the issue of sectarianism. She stated that there were frequent admonitions for teachers to care for the souls of the children and that she was

told she would be responsible for the spiritual development of her pupils, including developing their "soul consciousness." She was upset by the experience which she said invaded her privacy and condoned the teaching of religion. This teacher resigned as the training drew to a close and did not participate in, or observe, the teaching at Tubman.

¹⁷ Jones, Sharon L. (1995, July 12). Probe ordered of charter school. *San Diego Union Tribune*, p. B-1.

Jones, Sharon L. (1995, July 26). School district plans a survey of parents on Tubman School. *San Diego Union Tribune*, p. B-2.

¹⁸ For an overview of this literature see: Hannaway, Jane & Carnoy, Martin (Eds.) (1993). *Decentralization and School Improvement: Can We Fulfill the Promise?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

¹⁹ Dianda, M. & Corwin, R. op cit.; Little Hoover Commission, op cit.

²⁰ Education Code Section 47601

²¹ Education Code Section 47605(b)

²² Education Code Section 47607(b)

²³ Education Code Section 47610

²⁴ Education Code Section 47612(b)

²⁵ EC 47601f

²⁶ Little Hoover Commission, op cit., p. 73.

²⁷ Dianda, M. & Corwin, R., op cit.

Hudson Institute, op cit.

Little Hoover Commission, op cit.

²⁸ For a recent study that outlines the importance of leadership in site-based managed schools, see: Miller, Edward. (1995). *Shared Decision Making By Itself Doesn't Make for Better Decisions. The Harvard Education Letter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

²⁹ Dianda, M. & Corwin, R., op cit.

Little Hoover Commission, op cit. However some startup funds were available for the reopening of the Muir site as an over flow school.

APPENDIX A: TEXT OF CHARTER SCHOOL LAW

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION CODE

PART 26.8. CHARTER SCHOOLS

CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS 47600-47603

CHAPTER 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF CHARTER SCHOOLS 47605-47607

CHAPTER 3. CHARTER SCHOOL OPERATION AND FUNDING 47610-47612

CHAPTER 4. NOTICE 47616

47600. This part shall be known, and may be cited, as the "Charter Schools Act of 1992."

47601. It is the intent of the Legislature, in enacting this part, to provide opportunities for teachers, parents, pupils, and community members to establish and maintain schools that operate independently from the existing school district structure, as a method to accomplish all of the following:

- a) Improve pupil learning.
- b) Increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for pupils who are identified as academically low achieving.
- c) Encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods.
- d) Create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- e) Provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of educational opportunities that are available within the public school system.
- f) Hold the schools established under this part accountable for meeting measurable pupil outcomes, and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.

47602. (a) The total number of charter schools operating in this state in any school year shall not exceed 100, with not more than 10 charter schools in any single school district. For the purposes of implementing this section, the State Board of Education shall assign a number to each charter notice it receives pursuant to subdivision (I) of Section 47605, based on the chronological order in which the notice is received. (b) No charter shall be granted under this part that authorizes the conversion of any private school to a charter school.

47603. This part shall not be construed to prohibit any private person or organization from providing funding or other assistance to the establishment or operation of a charter school.

47605. (a) A petition for the establishment of a charter school within any school district may be circulated by any one or more persons seeking to establish the charter school. After the petition has been signed by not less than 10 percent of the teachers currently employed by the school district, or by not less than 50 percent of the teachers currently employed at one school of the district, it may be submitted to the governing board of the school district for review. (b) No later than 30 days after receiving a petition, in accordance with subdivision (a), the governing board of the school district shall hold a public hearing on the provisions of the charter, at which time the board shall consider the level of employee and parental support for the petition. Following review of the petition and the public hearing, the governing board shall either grant or deny the charter within 60 days of receipt of the petition, provided, however, that the date may be extended by an additional 30 days if both parties agree to the extension. A school district governing board may grant a charter for the operation of a school under this part if it determines that the petition contains the number of signatures required by subdivision (a), a statement of each of the conditions described in subdivision (d), and descriptions of all of the following:

- (1) A description of the educational program of the school, designed, among other things, to identify those whom the school is attempting to educate, what it means to be an "educated person" in the 21 st century, and how learning best occurs. The goals identified in that program shall include the objective of enabling pupils to become self-motivated, competent, and lifelong learners.
- (2) The measurable pupil outcomes identified for use by the charter school. "Pupil outcomes," for purposes of this part, means the extent to which all pupils of the school demonstrate that they have attained the skills, knowledge, and attitudes specified as goals in the school's educational program.
- (3) The method by which pupil progress in meeting those pupil outcomes is to be measured.
- (4) The governance structure of the school, including, but not limited to, the process to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.

- (5) The qualifications to be met by individuals to be employed by the school.
 - (6) The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff. These procedures shall include the requirement that each employee of the school furnish the school with a criminal record summary as described in Section 44237.
 - (7) The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted.
 - (8) Admission requirements, if applicable.
 - (9) The manner in which an annual audit of the financial and programmatic operations of the school is to be conducted.
 - (10) The procedures by which pupils can be suspended or expelled.
 - (11) The manner by which staff members of the charter schools will be covered by the State Teachers' Retirement System, the Public Employees' Retirement System, or federal social security.
 - (12) The public school attendance alternatives for pupils residing within the school district who choose not to attend charter schools.
 - (13) A description of the rights of any employee of the school district upon leaving the employment of the school district to work in a charter school, and of any rights of return to the school district after employment at a charter school.
- (c) Charter schools shall meet the statewide performance standards and conduct the pupil assessments required pursuant to Section 60602.5.
- (d) In addition to any other requirement imposed under this part, a charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all other operations, shall not charge tuition, and shall not discriminate against any pupil on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability. Admission to a charter school shall not be determined according to the place of residence of the pupil, or of his or her parent or guardian, within this state, except that any existing public school converting partially or entirely to a charter school under this part shall adopt and maintain a policy giving admission preference to pupils who reside within the former attendance area of that public school.

(e) No governing board of a school district shall require any employee of the school district to be employed in a charter school.

(f) No governing board of a school district shall require any pupil enrolled in the school district to attend a charter school.

(g) The governing board may require that the petitioner or petitioners provide information regarding the proposed operation and potential effects of the school, including, but not limited to, the facilities to be utilized by the school, the manner in which administrative services of the school are to be provided, and potential civil liability effects upon the school and upon the school district.

(h) In reviewing petitions for the establishment of charter schools within the school district, the school district governing board shall give preference to petitions that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to pupils identified by the petitioner or petitioners as academically low achieving pursuant to the standards established by the State Department of Education under Section 54032.

(i) Upon the approval of the petition by the governing board of the school district, the petitioner or petitioners shall provide written notice of that approval, including a copy of the petition, to the State Board of Education.

- (j)
- (1) If the governing board of the school district denies a charter, the county superintendent of schools, at the request of the petitioner or petitioners, shall select and convene a review panel to review the action of the governing board. The review panel shall consist of three governing board members from other school districts in the county and three teachers from other school districts in the county unless only one school district is located in the county, in which case the panel members shall be selected from school districts in adjoining counties.
 - (2) If the review panel determines that the governing board failed to appropriately consider the charter request, or acted in an arbitrary manner in denying the request, the review panel shall request the governing board to reconsider the charter request. In the case of a tie vote of the panel, the county superintendent of schools shall vote to break the tie.
 - (3) If, upon reconsideration, the governing board denies a charter, the county education, at the request of the petitioner or petitioners, shall hold a public hearing in the manner described in subdivision (b) and, accordingly, may grant a charter. A charter school for which a charter is granted by a county board of education pursuant to this paragraph shall qualify fully as a charter school for all funding and other purposes of this part.

47606. (a) A school district may convert all of its schools to charter schools under this part only if it meets all of the following conditions:

- (1) Fifty percent of the teachers within the school district sign the charter petition.
- (2) The charter petition contains all of the requirements set forth in subdivisions (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f) of Section 47605 and a provision that specifies alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils residing within the school district who choose not to attend charter schools.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (b) of Section 47605, the districtwide charter petition shall be approved only by joint action of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education.

47607. (a) A charter may be granted pursuant to Sections 47605 and 47606 for a period not to exceed five years. A charter granted by a school district governing board or county board of education may be granted one or more subsequent renewals by that entity. Each renewal shall be for a period not to exceed five years. A material revision of the provisions of a charter petition may be made only with the approval of the authority that granted the charter.

(b) A charter may be revoked by the authority that granted the charter under this chapter if the authority finds that the charter school did any of the following:

- (1) Committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter petition.
- (2) Failed to meet or pursue any of the pupil outcomes identified in the charter petition.
- (3) Failed to meet generally accepted accounting standards of fiscal management.
- (4) Violated any provision of law.

47610. A charter school shall comply with all of the provisions set forth in its charter petition, but is otherwise exempt from the laws governing school districts except as specified in Section 47611.

47611. If a charter school chooses to participate in the State Teacher's Retirement System, all employees of the charter school who qualify for membership in the system shall be covered under the system, and all provisions of Part 13 (commencing with Section 22000) shall apply in the same manner as if the charter school were a public school in the school district that granted the charter.

47612. (a) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall make all of the following apportionments to each charter school for each fiscal year:

- (1) From funds appropriated to Section A of the State School Fund for apportionment for that fiscal year pursuant to Article 2 (commencing with Section 42238) of Chapter 7 of Part 24, an amount for each unit of regular average daily attendance in the charter school that is equal to the current fiscal year base revenue limit for the school district to which the charter petition was submitted.
- (2) For each pupil enrolled in the charter school who is entitled to special education services, the state and federal funds for special education services for that pupil that would have been apportioned for that pupil to the school district to which the charter petition was submitted.
- (3) Funds for the programs described in clause (I) of subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 54761, and Sections 63000 and 64000, to the extent that any pupil enrolled in the charter school is eligible to participate.

(b) A charter school shall be deemed to be under the exclusive control of the officers of the public schools for purposes of Section 8 of Article IX of the California Constitution, with regard to the appropriation of public moneys to be apportioned to any charter school, including, but not limited to, appropriations made for the purposes of subdivisions (a) and (b).

(c) A charter school shall be deemed to be a "school district" for purposes of Section 41302.5 and Sections 8 and 8.5 of Article XVI of the California Constitution.

47616. The State Department of Education shall review the educational effectiveness of the charter school approach authorized under this part and, not later than January 1, 1999, shall report to the Legislature accordingly with recommendations to modify, expand, or terminate that approach.

APPENDIX B SAN DIEGO CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY: GUIDING FRAMEWORK

December 7, 1995

PART I: Questions Based on Charter School Law

| General Evaluation Question | Specific Questions | Findings |
|--|--|--|
| 1.0 Is there evidence of progress toward achieving the student outcomes identified in the charter? | <p>1.1 What measurable student outcomes have the charter school established?</p> <p>1.2 How are the stated outcomes being measured?</p> <p>1.3 Is there evidence that the stated outcomes are improving for all students?</p> <p>1.4 What steps has the school taken to address student outcomes that have not been achieved?</p> <p>1.5 Based on the petition, when is it reasonable to expect to see measurable improvement in student outcomes?</p> | <p>An analysis of the charter petition reveals that the school has stated, with varying degrees of specificity, student outcomes (see discussion in <i>Methods</i> section). While the petition gives little attention to methods of measuring stated outcomes, teachers identified multiple instruments and approaches to assessing the performance of students (see <i>Findings: Educational Program</i> section). In addition, it was noted that students in this school scored relatively low last year on the district's test. Scores for this year's test were not available at the time this report was written. However, it reported that teachers are devoting more time preparing their students to take tests. More generally, it is important to remember that the school has just completed its second year, and it is not clear how much progress should be expected at this stage of development.</p> |
| 2.0 Does the racial and ethnic balance among student backgrounds reflect the general population within the district? | <p>2.1 Has the school taken steps to achieve a racial and ethnic balance consistent with the ethnic diversity of the district's resident population?</p> <p>2.2 Is there any evidence of discrimination based on student background?</p> <p>2.3 Is the school following its admission requirements?</p> <p>2.4 Are the admission requirements consistent with achieving a racial and ethnic balance?</p> <p>2.5 Are procedures the school is using to handle student discipline, suspensions, and expulsions non-discriminatory?</p> | <p>As the school's racial and ethnic balance is described in the <i>Findings: Parent Perspective</i> section, Tubman has diverse population which is fairly representative of the district's population. No specific incidents of discrimination were recorded, and nearly all parents who returned surveys said they know of none; a few indicated they did know of an incident, however. The study team did not investigate procedures used to handle student discipline and related problems. However, significant problems in these areas were not raised.</p> |

APPENDIX B: SAN DIEGO CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY

FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>3.0 How is the school being governed?</p> | <p>3.1 What opportunities has the school provided parents to become actively involved in their students' school experience? 3.2 Which parents participate in these activities?</p> | <p>A major section of the findings deals with school governance and how it is structured (see <i>Findings: Governance and Other Information</i>). The Governance Council includes parents, and it has been active. However, a number of challenges that remain to be addressed were also noted, including a broader cross-section of parents, more parent participation in meetings, and providing training for Council members. Also, ambiguities remain concerning the respective authority of the Council and the director, especially over personnel decisions and curriculum and instruction.</p> |
|--|--|--|

| General Evaluation Question | Specific Questions | Findings |
|--|---|--|
| 1.0 How closely does the school's educational program reflect district criteria? | <p>1.1 Is the school working to implement innovative teaching methods?</p> <p>1.2 Has the school taken steps to implement the California curriculum frameworks?</p> <p>1.3 Does the curriculum ensure that students will be self-motivated, competent, life-long learners?</p> <p>1.4 Is the school taking steps to assure that pupils will become self-motivated, competent, life-long learners?</p> | Descriptive information about curricular and instructional approaches is provided in the <i>Findings: Educational Program</i> section. While the Waldorf curriculum is different, we could not make a determination about innovation because we lack comparative data from other schools. Also, given the newness of the school and the ambiguities in the petition and district guidelines, no attempt was made assess how closely the school was implementing the Waldorf curriculum. In addition, the study did not examine whether the school was implementing the state curriculum frameworks because the petition did not state an intention to comply with them, and also because the school was modifying its curriculum during the study (see <i>Findings: Educational Program</i>). |
| 2.0 How is the school being staffed? | <p>2.1 What are the qualifications of persons employed by the school?</p> <p>2.2 Is staff training being provided?</p> <p>2.3 What staff development activities does the school provide for its staff?</p> <p>2.4 Are teachers covered by the STRS retirement system?</p> <p>2.5 Does the school have clear criteria for hiring teachers and are they consistently used?</p> | Information about the qualifications and experience of the teachers and the amount of training is provided in the <i>Findings: Staff Characteristics and Beliefs</i> section. Teachers describe Tubman as a collegial learning community. However, a dispute procedure used to terminate teachers is discussed in the findings with the section on school governance. Questions regarding coverage by STRS and hiring procedures were not pursued. |
| 3.0 Is the school targeting low-achieving students? | <p>3.1 What criteria has the school established to identify low-achieving students?</p> <p>3.2 What supplemental support services does the school provide for low-achieving students?</p> <p>3.3 How is the academic progress of low-achieving students being monitored?</p> <p>3.4 Is there evidence that low-achieving students are benefiting from the strategies and services being used?</p> | The teachers provide individual attention to students and their families, as reported in the <i>Findings: Educational Program and Parent Perspectives</i> section. Also, a variety of techniques that teachers use to monitor students' progress and communicate with parents were outlined. The school employs aides in the classrooms to help with limited-English proficient children and has a pull-out program. However, teachers complain that the latter tends to be disruptive and affects students' emotional and academic development. |

APPENDIX B: SAN DIEGO CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY

FROM PAPER TO PRACTICE

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>4.0 Has the charter school provided expanded choices in educational opportunities available within the public school system?</p> | <p>4.1 What choices in educational opportunities has the charter school provided its students and parents?</p> <p>4.2 What provision has the school made for students who chose not to attend a charter school that converted from a regular school within the district?</p> <p>4.3 What new responsibilities, professional challenges, and career opportunities is it providing?</p> | <p>These questions are discussed at length throughout the report. The Waldorf approach provides a clear option. However, because the school is adapting elements of Waldorf approaches and adopting elements from the district, it is not yet clear what type of hybrid approach will evolve. Also, while the district has provided parents with options, a number of parents are still not clear about them and some still may believe that their children are required to attend this school. This issue is discussed in detail in the <i>Findings: Parent Perspectives</i> and the <i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i> sections.</p> |
|---|---|--|

| General Evaluation Question | Specific Questions | Findings |
|---|---|--|
| 5.0 Is the school following school district procedures? | 5.1 How is attendance accounted for and reported? 5.2 Does the school contract for any services? | Auditing compliance with district procedures is beyond the scope of the study, therefore these questions were not addressed. |
| 6.0 Has the charter school met other conditions upon which the charter petition was approved? | 6.1 Is the school complying with SDUSD safety standards? 6.2 Has the school had an annual audit? 6.3 Is the school providing monthly cash flow reports to the district controller, and has the fiscal impact been revenue neutral? 6.4 Have all purchasing contracts in excess of \$15,000 been approved by the Board? 6.5 Is the school operating on a fiscal year basis? 6.6 Is the school participating in the district's general liability, workers compensation, and unemployment insurance programs? | Auditing compliance with district procedures is beyond the scope of the study, therefore these questions were not addressed. |

PART III: Questions Based on the School District's Criteria

| General Evaluation Question | Specific Questions | Findings |
|--|---|---|
| 1.0 Is the educational program consistent with the objectives stated in the charter? | 1.1 Which student populations does the school seek to serve? 1.2 Is the school actively conducting a proactive campaign to encourage diversification in student backgrounds? 1.3 Has the College of Teachers developed a remedial plan to assist students who fail to meet student outcomes, as promised in the charter petition? | The student and parent populations are described in the <i>Findings: Parent Perspective</i> section. The student population is multiethnic and serves a larger proportion of African-American children than other schools in the district on average. Teachers report that they are selecting and adapting Waldorf materials for the unique needs of their student population. We did not ask about a remedial plan for special needs students. |
| 2.0 Is the school offering the educational program promised in the petition? | 2.1 Is the curriculum being used consistent with the curriculum promised in the charter? 2.2 How is multicultural education being ensured? 2.3 Are languages other than English taught in the school? 2.4 Does the school offer a special education class taught by a trained special needs teacher? | The several elements of the curriculum and the instructional approaches used appear to be consistent with aspects of the curriculum described in the petition. However, the WestEd study did not include a Waldorf expert and therefore no attempt was made to measure the degree of alignment called for in this question. Several approaches to multicultural education were described in connection with findings about the school program, including a diverse student population, ethnic festivals, and stories about other cultures. Although the petition proposed that languages other than English would be taught, the school does not offer formal courses in other languages. Several teachers teach another language, as do many of the students and their parents, and there is an ESL program in the school. The study team did not investigate special education in depth, but it was learned that the school uses district specialists to assess and assist students (see the <i>Findings: Educational Program</i> section). |
| 3.0 Are teacher qualifications consistent with the charter petition? | 3.1 Do teachers without prior teaching experience receive appropriate training in Waldorf education? 3.2 What are the qualifications of the nonteaching staff? | Teacher qualifications and training are described in the <i>Findings: Staff Characteristics and Beliefs</i> section. In general, most of them have participated in several inservice sessions during the past year, and the education director observed nearly all teachers, some several times. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4.0 Is the school following general procedures described in the petition? | 4.1 Has the school been evaluated by a team of educators that includes representatives from the San Diego Unified School District? 4.2 Does the school provide parent conferences to report on student progress? 4.3 What are the provisions of the site-based parent contracts being used? 4.4 Is the school following the procedures described in the petition relevant to student discipline, suspensions, and expulsions and relevant to dismissing teachers? 4.5 Does the school require each employee to furnish a criminal record summary (ref: EC 44237)? | A team of outside evaluators did visit the school. However, the study team did not investigate the nature or results of the evaluation. Most parents have participated in parent conferences and most parents surveyed said they have been informed of their child's progress in school. The study did not investigate procedures used to handle student discipline. However, the study did learn of complaints about the way teachers were terminated during the first year, which are described in the <i>Background and Context</i> section and in the <i>Findings: Governance and Other Information</i> section, in connection with school governance. The district personnel office informed WestEd that every employee at this school was required to furnish a criminal record summary. |
| General Evaluation Question | Specific Questions | Findings |
| 5.0 Is the school following administrative procedures described in the petition? | 5.1 Is the school following the administrative/governance plan proposed in the charter petition? 5.2 Is the school following the procedures described in the petition pertaining to the Governance Council? | Entire sections of the report, <i>Background and Context, Findings: Governance and Other Information, Conclusions and Recommendations</i> , are devoted to describing and analyzing school governance. Several difficulties with the procedures, as they are being implemented, were identified. The procedures in the petition are not very descriptive, but we did identify the structure, role and responsibilities of different governance structures of the school. |
| 6.0 What process was used to approve the charter petition and what was the role of the district's criteria? | 6.1 How did the district office interpret its published criteria for approving charter schools? 6.2 How did the school interpret the district's criteria for approving charter schools? 6.3 How did the school board interpret the district's criteria for approving charter schools? 6.4 What communication has taken place between the district and school concerning these criteria? | These questions were addressed in the <i>Background and Context</i> and <i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i> sections of the report, where it was emphatically noted that the way the school originated, including the charter petition approval process, is responsible for many difficulties that were subsequently encountered by this school. In particular, several of the district's guidelines did not provide clear expectations, and the board approved the school over the district's recommendation. However, as discussed in the <i>Conclusions</i> section, the basic problems are inherent in the ambiguities in the charter school law about the rights and responsibilities of charter schools and of districts. The report recommends that the district should address the issues raised in this report in order to clarify its relationship with charter schools. |

APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY

Teacher Interviews

An interview protocol was developed to guide the interviews with the teachers. A modified version of this same protocol was used to interview the school's director and his assistant. Each interviewer was free to explore unanticipated topics as they might arise.

Sources of the questions included:

- Our previous interviews with knowledgeable informants.
- Analyses of three primary documents: the legislation, the charter petition, and the district's guidelines for charter schools.
- WestEd's reviews, surveys, studies, and policy analyses of charter schools.
- On going analyses of the literature and Internet forums.

Interviewers summarized the information from each interview and circulated their notes among the study team. Each member of the study team proposed conclusions that could be supported by most of the interviews. These conclusions were in turn circulated, discussed and modified or discarded. These interviews, supplemented by classroom observations and parent interviews, provide the basis for most of our conclusions about the Waldorf approach and philosophy, as well as for some of our conclusions about the teacher's approaches to students.

Classroom Observations

A senior member of the study team observed one full class period of each previously interviewed teacher. The purpose of these interviews was to provide study team members with concrete examples of concepts and teaching approaches described in the interviews. Also, they helped highlight certain features of the program that otherwise might have been overlooked, and that the study team would need to probe in greater depth. These classroom observations were not used to evaluate classroom teaching.

Each observer summarized what was being done in the classroom at various times during the class period. Although the study team discussed guidelines for these observations, each observer was free to use her or his own discretion. Given these informal objectives, the procedures used were unstructured and remain largely undocumented.

Parent Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Tubman parents in order to obtain a deeper understanding of selected answers and to permit parents to describe their experiences with the school and voice their own opinions and attitudes in a semi-structured situation.

Sixteen parents (16) were selected at random, and four others selected because they were seated on the governance council. This constitutes an 11 percent sample, including a nine percent randomly selected sample. However, three (3) of the 16 randomly selected parents did not keep their appointments for the interviews and could not be rescheduled because of time constraints. Thus, 17 parents (9 percent of the total parent population) participated in the interviews conducted at a school district facility away from the Tubman school.

Sampling Procedure

A modified random sampling strategy was used to select the sample. First, names on the parent roster were numbered consecutively. The total number of parents was then divided by 16 (our target sample size). Using a random number table, a starting point was established, and the sample of 16 parents was selected. A second sample was also selected (from a different random starting point) to serve as a replacement sample for those who could not re-schedule.

The random sample was then modified slightly based on demographic criteria to ensure that our sample of parents matched the parent population at Tubman in terms of ethnicity, language, zip code, and their child's grade level. A total of 5 parents were switched from the replacement sample to the original sample; 4 of them were selected so that students from all grade levels would be represented. Despite our efforts to match the school's grade level composition, the sample over-represents the 4th grade. The reason is that it was necessary to replace several parents who could not be reached, and matching grade level was given lower priority in selecting the replacements than their ethnicity and language.

Three randomly selected parents who were scheduled to be interviewed did not keep their appointments, and they could not be re-scheduled or replaced in the available time frame. Two were Afro Americans in the 92104 Zip code; the other was Caucasian in the 92120 Zip code. Also, four parents were interviewed because they served on the governance council. They were not part of the random sample and they are not reflected in the information shown in Figure App.C1.

Parent Survey

A survey was mailed to all parents with students enrolled in the Tubman Village Charter School in order to learn how much they know about the school, their level of participation in it, and how satisfied they are with the school and with their child's academic progress. Questions were also asked about their child's educational progress and the various learning experiences that their child may be involved in at Tubman Village Charter School.

The sources of these questions were similar to those used to construct the teacher interview protocol, with the major exception that questions from the district's own previous surveys of parents were included. In addition, some information and unanswered questions from the teacher interviews helped guide the construction of this instrument.

Many of the questions were closed-ended, asking parents to check yes or no, or to respond along a Likert-type scale. In addition, almost one-third of the items on the survey were open ended, allowing parents to write in their own answers or to elaborate on previous ones. Their responses to these questions provided a context for interpreting the survey data, and also helped clarify some of the issues parents had raised. These responses were coded to use in data analysis along with the other survey items.

Procedures

On February 27, 1996, surveys were mailed all parents with children attending Tubman. Their names and addresses were obtained from the most current student roster (January, 1996) which included one parent or guardian for each student attending Tubman. Thirty-nine parents were identified as having more than one child at Tubman. In these cases, the child about whom the parent was asked to respond was selected using stratified sampling procedures. The total parent population was 180.

Three weeks after the first mailing, reminder postcards were sent to all parents reminding them to please complete the survey if they had not already done so. In addition, notices were printed in the Tubman school's newsletters urging parents to complete and return the survey. Approximately 20 surveys were returned by the postal service due to "insufficient address." In each case, the district called these parents to verify their addresses, and, when possible, another survey was sent home with the child.

Response Rate

The 180 parents returned eighty-one (81) completed surveys, representing a response rate of 45 percent. This response rate is substantially better than that of similar surveys previously conducted by the district which have been closer to 28 percent. These

relatively low rates of return can be attributed partly to the transience of many parents, and the unreliable mail delivery in large apartment complexes in which many of the Tubman families reside. We are confident that the parents who participated in the survey accurately reflect the range of opinions existing among parents in this school; that general conclusions based on patterns of responses are correct within an acceptable margin of error; that the responses can identify strengths and weaknesses of the school from the parents' point of view; and that the number of returns is large enough to permit reliable analyses of relationships among the variables. Moreover, some of the information from the survey was confirmed from other sources of information.

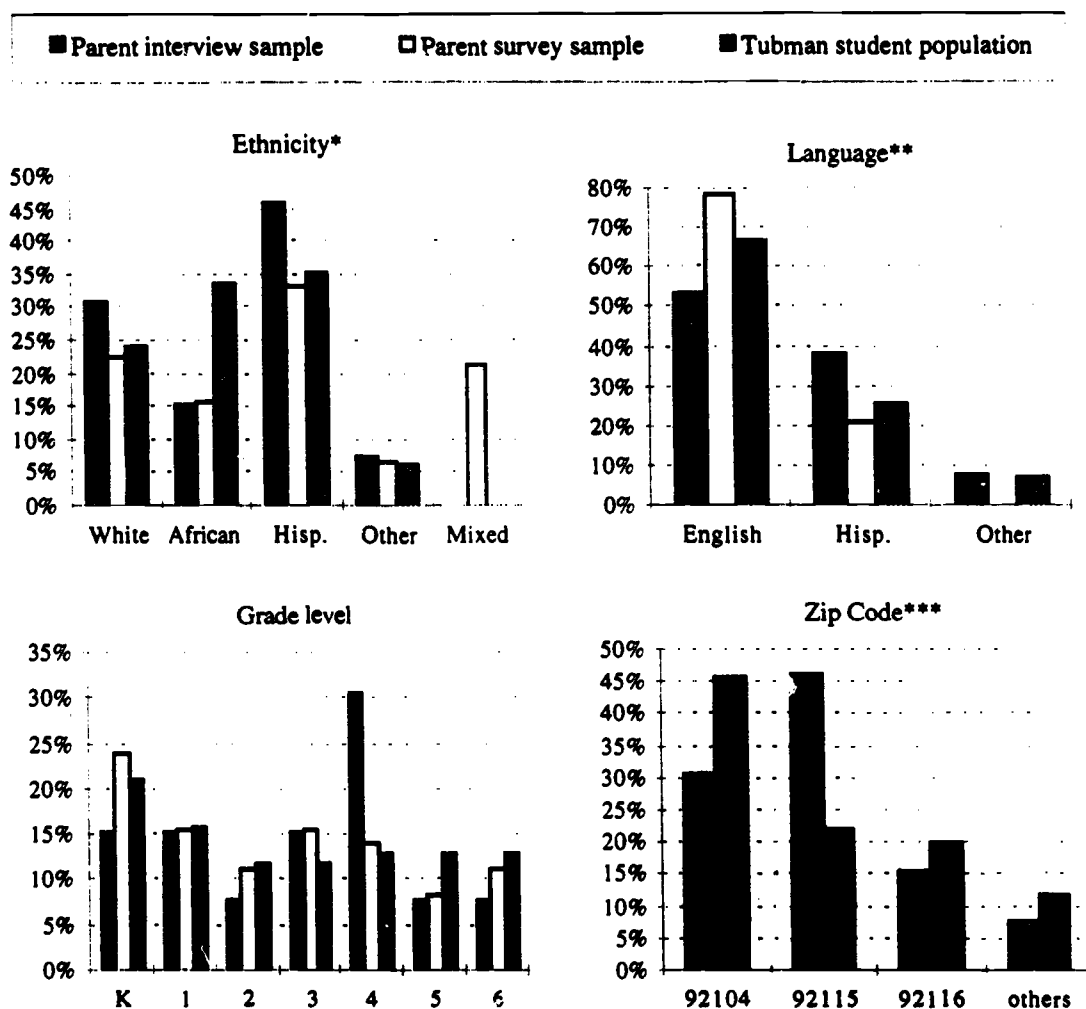
Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that fewer than one half the parents participated in the survey, thus increasing the probable error rate when generalizing to the total population of parents. In particular, the sample could be skewed in favor of parents with higher levels of education. The significance of this possibility will become apparent later, when we demonstrate a positive relationship between level of education and knowledge of and satisfaction with the school. Since those parents with lower levels of education tend to be the most critical of the school, the amount of criticism could be greater than reflected in our sample. This possible source of bias should be kept in mind when reading about the survey findings.

Representativeness of the Sample

To estimate how closely the sample reflects the population of Tubman parents, we have compared selected characteristics of the sample to known parameters of the population. Some of these results are summarized in Figure App.C1 below.

Response Bias

The graphs in Figure App.C1 indicate that our survey returns closely match the population of parents in ethnic composition, language, and grade level. (Zip code was not available for survey returns.) What is not entirely clear is to what extent the sample allows extrapolation to the parents who did not return questionnaires. If the people who did not return the questionnaire are identical to those who did, the sample returns could be safely extrapolated to all parents in the school. Since the non-response rate is close to half of the parents, one would simply double the numbers. For example, if 40 respondents say they are very satisfied with the school, the total number of very satisfied parents in the district as a whole would be around 80 (of the 180 households).

Figure App. C1*Selected Demographic Characteristics: Tubman Parent Samples and Total Population*

* Some parents identified themselves with more than one ethnic group on the WestEd parent survey. District categorization allows for identification with only one ethnic group.

** Parent Surveys were administered in Spanish and English only.

*** WestEd's parent survey was anonymous, so respondents' zip code was unknown.

However, it is of course possible that the non-respondents differ from the respondents. It is known, for example, that people who have a particular interest in the subject matter, or in the outcomes of the research itself are more likely to return mail questionnaires than those who are less interested. It is also known that respondents who return their questionnaires quickly differ from those who return slowly. Therefore, we examined relationships between dates surveys were returned and selected variables (such as satisfaction with the school, occupational background and level of education). No

patterns or differences could be detected that would indicate systematic bias that would affect our key conclusions.

Still, patterns in the sample suggest two possible sources of concern. First, it appears that there is a smaller percentage of Afro-Americans among our questionnaire returns than in the school as a whole (16 percent vs. 34 percent) (Figure App.C1). However, we believe this difference can be largely accounted for by the fact that a number of Afro-Americans chose two ethnic identities, whereas district records count only one. Also, district records pertain to student backgrounds, not parent backgrounds. When all respondents who selected "Afro-American" as at least one of their identities are counted, the percentage of Afro-Americans in our sample increases to 30 percent (Table App.C1), which is similar to the district's figures.

Table App. C1

Percentage of Ethnic Groups Represented by Tubman Charter School Parent Survey.

| | n | percent of responses (n=93) | percent of cases (n=75) |
|------------------|----|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hispanic | 34 | 36.6 | 45.3 |
| White | 25 | 26.9 | 33.3 |
| African American | 23 | 24.7 | 30.7 |
| Other | 11 | 11.8 | 14.6 |
| | 93 | 100.00 | 123.9 |

- * To estimate the number of parents belonging to any one ethnic group, respondents of mixed ethnicity were counted more than once.
- * The 75 parents provided 93 responses when questioned about their ethnic background. Fifty nine parents (73.8) identified with only one group, while 14 (17.5 percent) and 2 (2.5 percent) identified with 2 and 3 groups, respectively. Example: 23 parents classified themselves as all or part African-American, which accounted for 24.7 percent of the 93 ethnicity responses given. In total, 30.7 percent of the sample claimed some African-American identity

A second concern is that better educated parents could be over-represented in this sample. Over half the respondents in the parent sample indicated they have at least some college education and nearly 60 percent of the households responding reported that one or more of the parents were employed in a professional setting. (Table App.C2) Though we do not have reliable figures on the proportion of Tubman parents who have been to college, approximately 80 percent of the *students* at Tubman qualify for free or reduced meals, which seems to reinforce the hypothesis that there may be an under-representation of low-income parents in the sample.

Table App. C2*Educational Background and Occupation Level of Tubman Parents*

| | | n | percent |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|----|---------|
| Education level | Elementary school | 4 | 6 |
| | Junior High school | 10 | 14 |
| | High school | 18 | 26 |
| | College | 38 | 54 |
| Occupation | Not working /Service sector | 29 | 42 |
| | 1 Professional parent | 28 | 41 |
| | 2 Professional parents | 12 | 17 |

There are several other bases for our supposition that the sample could be skewed in favor of better educated parents:

- Our data show that the most educated parents are the most active and supportive parent group in the school and therefore they are likely to be most interested in the outcomes of this study and most likely to participate.
- Some research suggests that questionnaire response rates generally tend to be positively associated with level of education. A consistent bias in mail surveys is that better-educated people usually send back mail questionnaires more readily than those with less education, who tend to be under-represented. Therefore, any mail study of a variable that is related to education may produce biased estimates.

However, a possible explanation for the apparently high ratio of parents with some college education may be found in research that has suggested that better educated parents disproportionately seek out choice programs such as the Tubman charter school in which case our sample would not be over-representative of better educated parents, but would in fact simply be reflecting that more parents with higher levels of education chose to send their child to Tubman.

In any case, the question remains as to whether sample bias, if it exists, is large enough to affect the conclusions. We are inclined to believe that there is some sample bias, which under-represents less-educated parents. The significance of this assumption will become apparent later, when we demonstrate a positive relationship between level of education and knowledge of and satisfaction with the school. Since less well educated parents tend to be the most critical of the school, the amount of criticism could be greater than reflected in our sample.

APPENDIX D: PARENT RESPONSES

Parent responses, sorted by code, to the survey question:

"Please name the reasons you decided to send your child to the Tubman charter school?"

push factor -- no active decision to send child to Tubman.

pull factor -- where an active choice was made to send child to Tubman.

Parent responses coded as "push factors"/Reasons parents were "pushed" towards Tubman:

- It was the district school. I wanted the neighborhood school.
- Because of the zone this is the school that corresponds to her
- It's the area that she gets
- Because the school where she went did not have room, because there were too many children, they let us choose. That is why I sent her to Tubman school.
- Because we came to live in the U.S.
- Because Jefferson's school area was cut back and he was left outside the area
- Because it's the closest to my house and in case of an emergency I will be there quickly.
- Because it's the corresponding school
- Moved to 4123 Hamilton St.
- It's near our house.
- It's near our house
- It was the closest school.
- Jefferson was too far for my babies at the time they enrolled & we were in lemon grove getting buses before so it's just fine.
- Originally, it was the school for my certain boundary requirements. The 2nd year because I was happy with the progress of my child.
- It is in our neighborhood
- It was the only one that had room.
- Close to home
- No room in the schools
- I was out of boundary for the school
- We moved to different state
- Because Birney was overcrowded and they sent home papers stating that my child had to attend another school
- Was refer by the #. I needed to call to find out what school they should go to.
- You bus my child I live 1 1/2 block from Jefferson he went there from K to 4 grade. The school Board say he had to go to Harriet Tubman we want him to go to Jefferson.
- No

- Harriet Tubman was not my choice I want my son to go to Jefferson I was told that he was not in that District and that I must send him to H-Tubman.
- I was told that we lived in an outside area, that my daughter had to go to another school, I was given a few choice's and since I work in La Mesa Tubman was better choice.
- I was very unhappy with Jefferson
- Because its near home and seem good.
- Because it was the school my child was sent to because our neighborhood school, Birney was full. By choice, it is a wonderful school with multiculturalism taught.
- Was forced due to an overflow of his home school
- The neighborhood school gave us choices. I chose Tubman for the location
- Close to home, and she belongs to the school with our address
- near the house
- We moved by it
- Moved out of Brooklyn Dist. and Jefferson as too crowded
- Moved to San Diego and Birney was full.
- I had to choose between sending my child to a school in Linda or La Mesa, your school I chose because I liked the Vista are better.
- Had only 2 choices and wished I'd picked the other.
- The boundaries were changed and I was forced to choose another school.
- He was referred to that school
- The school is in the zone in which we live.
- At Jefferson there weren't any more quotas

Parent responses coded as "pull factors"/ Reasons parents were "pulled" towards Tubman

- It's better like a change of school
- Because there is more discipline and more attention
- I was very excited when I heard that a Waldorf method school was opening. When our neighborhood school was "redistricted", I was glad to sign up for this option.
- The other school was crowded and did not seem to respond to diverse learning styles. I like Tubman's more creative way of teaching and variety of subjects and flexibility.
- I was impressed with the Waldorf philosophy and even considered the private Waldorf school
- I like the Waldorf philosophy, my child wants to learn now, more than ever.
- Excellence in education. Convenience
- Dissatisfied with the approach of traditional elementary school education, wanted more of "hands-on & eyes-on" education. And an opportunity to be involved in a Charter School.
- I preferred that my child not attend a kindergarten in which academics were stressed. I understood that the emphasis here was to allow the child, the time and the activities to develop a foundation for learning
- Curriculum and number of students per teacher
- Because I know the teaching process was child centered.

- I was pleased with the experience and progress of her older sister who was enrolled in Harriet Tubman last year.
- Closer to home. Good ideas in teaching. Went up to sixth grade.
- I became aware that a free Waldorf School was opening. I have already raised 2 children in traditional public schools and had many negative experiences. My 3rd child was in the first grade and already refusing to go to school
- To provide my child a better education
- His older brother was already attending Tubman and we had been happy with his progress
- Mrs. Golfinos
- Hands on more of a nurturing environment more to the child's level of learning not a group level
- I liked what I had heard about the curriculum. Re: music and arts, especially hand-work emphasized. Kindergarten not like the 1st grade I attend Catholic than pushing read -- developing the peripheral skills with rhythm, movement and the arts.
- My child hated Clay. Tubman was closer & I liked the hands on activities, knitting, gardening etc.
- For an alternative educational experience in a true multi-cultural environment
- Only public school I found which I liked; felt excited about.
- Because enrollment was small-mo- like one on one
- Because she could not read as of 3rd grade
- I wanted a change for my son & a way of learning that would be inspiring for him, Tubman has provided that inspiration.
- The developmental focus-with regard to learning academics, social skills and personal positive "self-concept" through enrichment studies
- To try a different system
- He would have same instructor throughout elementary years; method of instruction at Waldorf
- The Waldorf philosophy; the unique approach to children's education; because it's the perfect alternative to traditional public school teaching (which stinks); the commitment of the faculty and staff
- I work there

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